

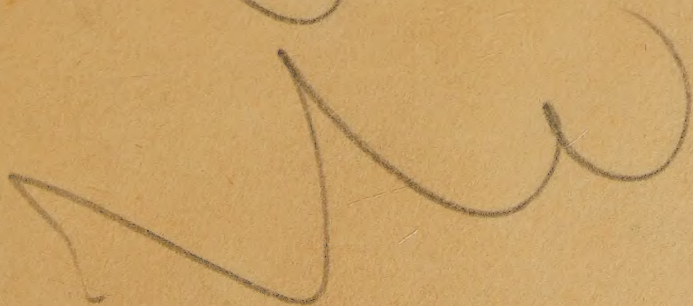
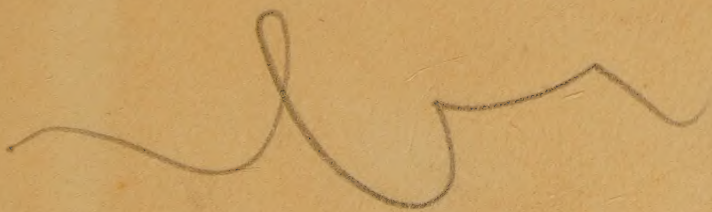
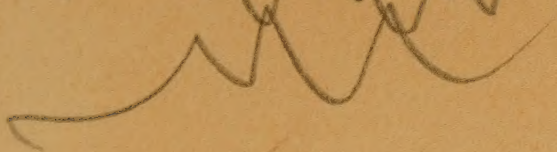
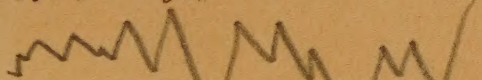
THE "PATHFINDER'S" GREAT FLIGHT



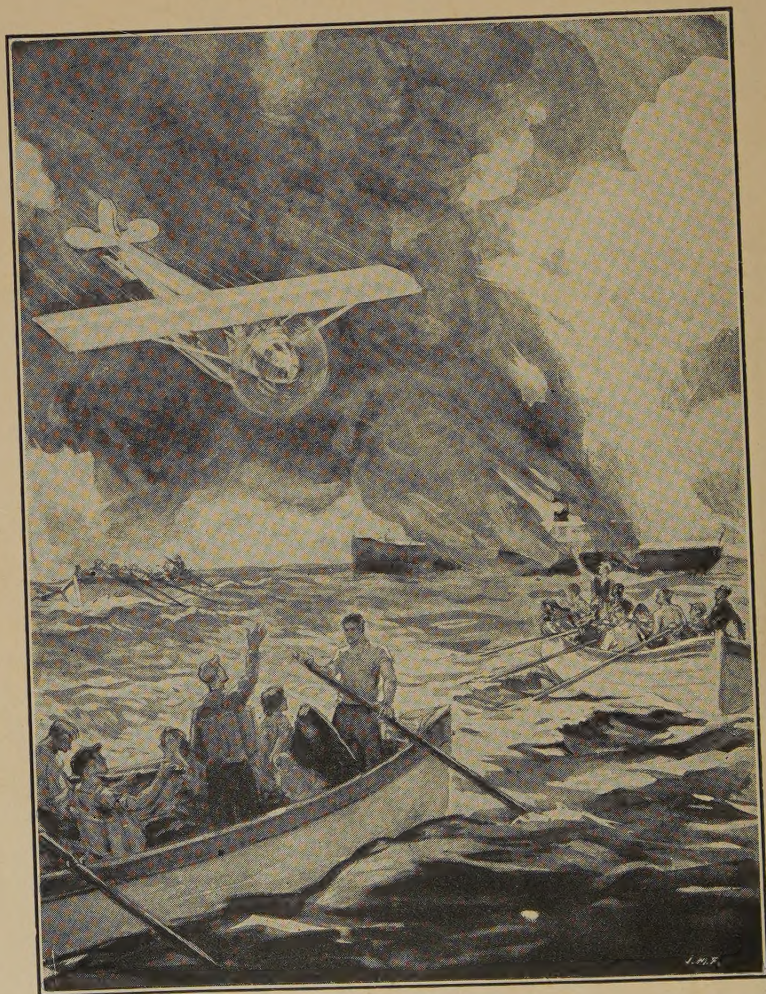
John Prentice Langley

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Kenneth Bloomer.







Amos avoided that dense cloud of smoke as he drew closer.
(The Pathfinder's Great Flight)

(Frontispiece)

THE "PATHFINDER'S" GREAT FLIGHT

OR

Cloud Chasers Over Amazon Jungles

BY

JOHN PRENTICE LANGLEY

AUTHOR OF "TRAIL BLAZERS OF THE SKIES,"
"SPANNING THE PACIFIC," "MASTERS OF
THE AIR-LANES," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN M. FOSTER



PUBLISHERS

BARSE & CO.

NEW YORK, N. Y.

NEWARK, N. J.

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Printed in the United States of America

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THE "PATHFINDER'S" GREAT FLIGHT

CHAPTER I

WHEN THE DAYS DRAGGED

"Hot dog! this sure is getting monotonous, Pal Amos!"

"Just hold your horses a little longer, Danny, old scout. I'm looking for a wire any day from our good friend and benefactor, Mr. Carstairs!"

"I'm right glad to hear you say so. Here we've been knockin' around little old San Diego these four long months, and on the ground so much you'd take us for a couple of *kiwis** instead of two round-the-globe aviators, waitin' to tackle

* Many World War veterans will recall the "*kiwi*," as ground officers of the air service were designated by all but themselves. The *kiwi* is an Australian bird that has wings, but cannot fly, made famous by the following lines sung at many a gathering of aviators:

"We don't have to march with the Infantee,
Shoot with the Artillree,
Ride with the Cavalree.
We don't have to fly over Germanee,
For we are the *Ki-wi-wi*."

some new stunt in long-distance flying that will break another world record. Gee whiz! I'm strainin' at the leash like a hound dog, with a strong scent driftin' to his nostrils!"

"Don't forget how we've put through a few right neat jobs so far, Danny!"

"Now you're talkin', pardner—first over to Paris and back again; then that dandy non-stop hop to Japan; and last of all keepin' zoomin' round the world in exactly fourteen days! But, shucks! a feller built like Danny Cooper, ex-mail pilot, just *can't live on* the glory of past performances. I'm like that ancient chap Alexander—wearyin' for new worlds to conquer!"

"Our next break promises to be a corker, Danny."

"Tickles me to hear you say so, Amos. Always did have a sort of hankerin' to top the Andes, and take a shy at those endless jungles of Brazil. Then think of us droppin' down to float on that mysterious river, the mighty Amazon; and mebbe runnin' smack up against that queer race of pygmies I was readin' about t'other day! Hot dog! Wouldn't that be a heap of fun though?"

"It's going to be a tough nut for us to crack, too; fact is, I think it will hold more dangers to the square foot than the Arctic seas did for Byrd. Even a dash into the Antarctic Circle over the Southern Pole couldn't be much worse."

"Well, one thing sure, boy, we won't stand a chance of *freezing*, anyway!"

"Huh! more than likely we'll be in danger of finding ourselves melting away, like Mother's red wax Christmas candles on a scorching August day. But, Danny, when you speak of our spending so much time on the ground, you forget how often we've been out with our plane, taking a day's spin over the ocean; or turning back to our old lines across the Rockies, that we used to follow, come cold, come hot, stormy weather and all, week in and week out, while working for Uncle Sam's air-mail service."

"Now, that's right, Amos, I did forget those bully outings. Almost every time we've hopped off it was with the intention of trying out something new and up-to-date that Mr. Carstairs had supplied us with."

"I agree with you there, Danny."

"For one thing, Pal Amos, there's that combination landing gear, with wheels for alighting on the solid ground, and light aluminum pontoons for use on the water. Work like charms, and can change the *Pathfinder* from an airplane, or a hydroplane, to what they choose to call an *amphibian*, with all landing spots the same to her."

"Don't forget the new *Whirlwind* engine we installed. Our old one certainly served us faithfully, having a proud record of over fifty thousand miles and no serious breakdown, at that."

"And while we considered the cast-off a regular marvel," continued Danny, "I'm free to own up

that this latest type has many improvements in air-cooled motors—it's lighter, easier to handle and can show more power to the square inch every hour it's run."

"Why," added Amos Green, unusual enthusiasm lightning up his serious, tanned face, while his keen eyes fairly sparkled, "it works so wonderfully that it just seems to be part and parcel of the pilot's own body, and sometimes I'm almost believing it can anticipate my intentions, so speedy is its response."

"Yes," pursued the clever navigator, Amos's understudy, and sworn pal, "and there's that new patented sextant, invented by an assistant professor of astronomy right here in our University of California, who, knowing what a passion for all the elements of scientific aviation his warm friend and ours—Mr. Carstairs, as we know him—had in his make-up, desired him to have the new instrument tried out under practical and everyday conditions."

"Well, you've given it the severest kind of a test, Danny, I'd venture to say."

"Sure have, Amos, and I'm all filled up with bubbling enthusiasm over the result. It's built pretty much on the model of a regular ship's sextant, only the need of a chart-room has been utterly done away with. After the necessary observations have been completed, the observer's position as to latitude and longitude is mechanically and accurately recorded so that the result

can be instantly read directly from the face of the instrument without a speck of complicated and mathematical figgerin'. Yes, that new plane sextant is what I'd call a peach, and will prove its worth in pure gold when we make our next big open-sea flight—I reckon across the region of the North Pole."

"The Captain—" observed Amos, with an intonation that bordered close to reverence (for between themselves they often designated by this title their wealthy benefactor, whose middle name was Carstairs), "said in his last letter that nothing could ever be too good for a couple of likely lads whom he had come to care for as if they were his own sons. He'd put a cool million into a plane if he really believed he could better our *Pathfinder* in any way!"

"Such great luck as came our way," chortled the voluble Danny, "when you hitched up with that grand old sportsman, and dragged me into the combine, as you might say, by the scruff of my neck. We've seen some glorious times inside the last eight months, with lots of others zooming along toward us—unless we meet up with a bad crash."

"And just think," added Amos Green, reminiscently, "both of us, before we entered the air-mail service, were just humble gypsy pilots toddling around, carrying up passengers wherever we could find them, at State or County fairs; or giving exhibitions of parachute-jumping from a

five thousand foot ceiling, when the sand-bags * were scarce."

"The boys over at the aviation ground are trying to guess what sort of queer business we're following," said Danny with a chuckle.

"I know that," Amos went on to say, smiling in amusement, "but so far as I know, the whole thing remains a dark mystery. They only understand that Mr. Carstairs is a multi-millionaire sportsman, a crank on aviation, whose hobby it is to have every new and promising device given a fair and square try-out."

"Huh! nobody dreams for a minute, Amos, what stunts we've put up, and how we've secretly busted several world records for long-distance flights."

"Well, there's one chap, though, who *suspects* a whole lot, I've reason to believe, Danny."

"Bet you mean Old Dud Rackett, ex-war pilot, and now flying instructor at the San Diego Aviation Field, eh, Amos?"

"You said it, Danny," came the prompt reply; "because, you see, he was really the first and only man to talk with Mr. Carstairs, when that gentleman came west looking for me, after being disappointed about coaxing Lindbergh to hitch up with him in his vast schemes."

"But old Dud's as close-mouthed as a clam at low tide, pardner," asserted Danny Cooper. "No

* A term used by air pilots to designate joy-riders in a plane. A passenger is said to be "sand-bagging."

matter what he knows, or suspects, he'll keep it to himself all right, believe *me!*"

"I can see you've sized up the old skipper like a book," said Amos. "As for myself I'm not a bit worried about Dud giving anything away."

"I'm right glad that the hangar we had built for our plane is as secure as locks can make it," remarked Danny; "because sometimes there are strangers loafin' around watchin' the coming and going of air-mail pilots. Then some of these Smart Alecks might get the idea in their heads that we were running diamonds across the Mexican border. Remember how much bother that Government Secret Service man gave us a while back, insisting on examining our plane inch by inch, until we got Mr. Carstairs to have him called off by a friend of his 'way up in the service?"

"Well, from the start we've always made it a practice to leave absolutely no clue to any of our flights lying around, so he had all his trouble for nothing. All this time since last summer, when we made the grand circuit of the globe, we've been, as you said, hanging around here, chumming with the boys, becoming real movie fans so as to pass the time away, and giving Mr. Carstairs plenty of opportunities to get his wires working for the next stupendous flight he's anxious for us to make, for certain reasons that so far he hasn't exactly explained to us. But already the frost is on the pumpkins up in Dakota, and it's getting mighty close to the time he believed things would

be arranged for our flight south of the equator."

"I figger it's harder to make calculations down in that country than it was for us all through Asia and Europe, between Japan and Ireland, on that westward jaunt, eh, Amos?"

"No question about it," affirmed the other. "You see, much of our flight is bound to be over a wilderness, or jungle, where no living human being holds out save the savage Indians, who as a rule hate the whites, and can use poisoned arrows with terrible effect. Procuring an adequate gas supply will be our greatest trouble, I reckon. But I'm leaving all that to Mr. Carstairs, for he's proved to be the best organizer on record, and uses money like water, when making arrangements."


"There's that rubber-cow pilot coming this way at a fast walk," ventured Danny, with a touch of scorn in his voice, as he thus designated the professional handler of a Government observation gas-bag, whom he often referred to as a "balloonatic," "and he's holdin' up some sort of paper which might be a message for us! Oh! man, don't I just hope and pray it's from *him*; and that he's giving us the high sign to pack up our duds so as to join him down in New Orleans!"

Young Green, too, must have been thrilled, even though he failed to show his feelings as did Danny. Not for nothing had he always been known as "Cool Amos." He walked out to meet

the advancing sausage-balloon pilot, took something from him, turned, and then came slowly back, reading as he walked, while impatient Danny almost turned purple with repressed anxiety.

Then, seeing a grin upon the features of his pal, he gave a whoop of joy.

"Hot dog! it's plain to be seen you're fetching bully good news!" cried the exultant navigator, wildly excited.



CHAPTER II

THE TELL-TALE WAX

DANNY stared at his grinning pilot as though he could almost eat him alive.

"It's true, then—the wire was from the Captain, Amos?" he demanded. Amos nodded violently.

"A man of his word, always, you remember," he observed, as calmly as though his adventurous heart were not also beating with the velocity of a trip-hammer.

"Shoot!" cried Danny wildly.

"Here's what he says—brief and to the point as usual:

" 'Wire if you can be at New Orleans with P, by Saturday, December seventeenth. Same address I gave you in my last. Everything possible has been taken care of. Weather permitting can hop off by following Tuesday. Many things to talk over with you both.

" 'Carstairs.' "

"Hot dog! *can* we manage to get there—I should say we can, and with a rush. Well, I'm tickled to death we have all that long-drawn-out

agony over with. Now there'll be somethin' doin' right away, eh, what, Amos, old sport? In the swim again, and going strong, you bet!"

He gravely shook hands with his friend, and really looked as delighted as though some kind person had remembered him in a will. Danny was one of those lads who live on excitement, and no sooner get through with one episode than they are eagerly anticipating the next.

"There's really nothing to be done, after taking aboard a full stock of fuel and oil," remarked Amos, reflectively, "because we've always made it a point to have things in readiness for a quick get-away. Don't give anyone a hint that we're soon to be on the wing again, bound for fresh fields of exploration and adventure, in a country of which so little is really known geographically as the jungle-land of the Amazon."

"I'll do my level best to act bored and grumpy, as if nothing out of the usual run had happened. But just the same, I reckon that sharp-eyed old Dud will suspect we're up to something, when he discovers our crate gettin' a bellyful of gas."

Amos laughed unconcernedly.

"Oh, Dud will never breathe a word to a living soul, Danny. If it hadn't been for our promise to Mr. Carstairs I'd have been tempted long ago to let him into the great secret. He's just the chap to glory in our luck, and say Lindbergh didn't have a thing on us, even if we do have to keep it all under cover. Come on, let's see how our fly-

ing horse looks, now that the hour is going to strike for the race to be on."

As they approached the sturdy hangar in which the wonderful *Pathfinder* (object of universal curiosity among the many aviators using the flying field at San Diego) was housed, Danny saw a man who was a total stranger to him, hanging around, who nodded to Amos as though he knew him.

Still, Amos had hosts of friends, having been a universal favorite all the time he was carrying the Government mail on his regular route; and so Danny did not bother his head at all about seeing this keen-eyed man loitering around the vicinity—if his pal knew the other, everything must be all right, he concluded.

"Now that we're alone," said Amos, when they had closed the doors again, "and can have a little confab without anyone picking up facts that might make us trouble, I've got something to tell you that is bound to give you a start."

"Go to it, then—I'm all set!" snapped Danny, his questioning gaze resting eagerly on his pal's face.

"There's been some one tampering with the lock of our hangar here," the other announced, quietly, yet with a bit of fire in his eyes.

"Snoopers, eh? Come creepin' around in the night-time tryin' to pick up a few clues as to what our game is? What did they do, and how have you managed to find out about it, Amos?"

“By the merest accident, you must know, Danny. Remember how I left you soon after breakfast this morning, intending to come over here and get that strand of wire, so as to duplicate it when going to the city later on? Just as I unlocked the padlock I noticed an odd look about it, and with my knife blade scraped something off its surface, something white, that made me hold my breath when I found out its nature.”

The pilot took a small doubled-up piece of paper, part of a used envelope, from his pocket, and turned it upside-down into his other hand.

“What would you say that might be, Old Hawk-eye?” he asked.

Danny picked up the minute fragment, smelled it, rubbed it between his fingers, and then grunted angrily:

“Huh! *wax*, or I’m off my base. Been takin’ an impression of the key-hole in the padlock, seems like! Thieves, d’you reckon—just plain every-day yeggs, with an idea we might be keepin’ somethin’ mighty valuable aboard our dandy plane? Or could it be some flier’s curiosity’s gone an’ got the better of his decency, so that he’s ready to break in, just to learn what we’re doin’ with all these expensive contraptions, such as no ordinary ex-mail carriers could afford to buy?”

“That’s something yet to be learned,” Amos told him. “Now, I knew you were in a nervous state, waiting for the message to come, and I

made up my mind there was really no sense of my telling you this bad news in a hurry. Getting that wire decided me to change my mind, for now you can stand it all right."

"Go on, Amos—I can guess that you didn't let the grass grow under your feet in figgerin' to beat these skunks at their own game."

"That's my way, as a rule, you know right well, Danny. I bought a new Yale lock when in the city, so the extra key isn't going to be a bit of use to these unknown parties, whether thieves, or just practical jokers who've stepped over the line in letting their curiosity get the better of their common sense and decency."

"Good enough!" snapped the other, "but I'm thinkin' you didn't stop at gettin' a new lock—that chap hangin' around the hangar's got somethin' to do with the affair, or I'll eat my hat, eh, what?"

Amos chuckled, as near as he was ever known to do, and surveyed his chum.

"You're on, Danny. Making up my mind that no dirty trick like that could be played on us, I hunted up a detective agency, the manager of which I chanced to know well. I told him enough to let him understand that we wanted protection for a short time, and made arrangements to have two of his best men detailed to accompany me out to the flying field here. They will take turns day and night, in guarding our plane, and I'm assured they'll give the surprise of his life to any

fellow caught fiddling with the lock on the doors here, under cover of darkness.”

“Say, wouldn’t I just love to be present when that happens?” muttered Danny between his teeth, and looking quite ferocious. “So all this came about because of a little scrap of wax stickin’ to the lock, did it?”

“Well, it was a dead give-away, you see!” declared Amos. “And now that we’re right on the threshold of a fresh flight into unknown parts of the earth, we’re bound to keep our precious plane from being injured in any way, even if both of us have to sleep here in the hangar, though I hardly think it’ll come to that.”

“See here, have you got any notion, Amos, there c’n be anything deeper about this game than just a yegg’s hope to make a rich haul, or else snoopin’ curiosity on the part of some slinkin’ critter who’s a disgrace to the loyal and clean crowd he trains with here? Come, out with it, if you have.”

“I admit I’m as densely ignorant on that score as you can be, Danny. All I know is there’s deviltry of some sort afoot, and we both believe in taking the bull by the horns, without waiting to be gored. Now I’ll change the lock, which will fend off trouble for at least one whole day, I reckon.”

“But if we hang out here until Thursday, meb-be even longer if the weather happens to be stormy, that’ll mean several more nights for our

stuff to be in danger. Hang it all, I'm willin' to stay on deck here right along up to our hop-off."

"Listen, Danny," said Amos in a low tone; "with everything in apple-pie shape, what's to hinder our getting off any time we feel like it?"

"Now you're talkin', pal."

"Even if we jumped over to New Orleans a day ahead we'd feel safer there than here at San Diego, where we've got everybody guessing. Like as not, the story of our rich backer has leaked into channels other than those of aviation. Even up in Frisco they may be telling each other down in the criminal slums how a couple of likely lads seem to be made of money down here at San Diego."

"Let it go at that, then, Amos. Whatever you say will suit me, as you know right well. There's only one thing I'm sorry we haven't had a chance to try out before making our get-away."

"What's that?" demanded the other, quickly. "I had a sneaking idea we'd investigated and tested about every new and promising device that has come on the market, and some, that, so far, are unknown to the trade."

"Don't laugh, pardner," said Danny, looking more or less foolish, "but the thing I've got in mind is really only a scheme that's been in my poor old brain a long while. And shucks! now I see some chap away over in gay Paree's gone and developed the same, it havin' been tried, with

good results, mind you, too, at Le Bourget flying field, where we dropped down on that first across-the-Atlantic jump we made.”*

“What’s its nature, Danny? I’m sorry some wide-awake inventor has gone and stolen your thunder.”

“It’s a novel type of landin’ gear, intended to absorb most of the shock of contact, and thus avoid crashes. In fact, Amos, it’s an application of the tractor shoe, that’s become such a valuable thing in war tanks, and every kind of machine for mowing the lawns of golf courses, plowing acres for crops, excavating ditches and trenches for pipes.”

Amos whistled to indicate his interest.

“Well, now, I shouldn’t wonder if there *might* be something worth while in such a scheme, Danny!” he ejaculated. “And to think that you’ve been secretly turning that same idea over in your brain, and never told me a thing about it. Too bad, because the pair of us might have interested Mr. Carstairs, and started the ball rolling. Then, too, if only we could originate something wonderfully fine like that, it would help quiet the suspicions of a bunch of wise guys who have come to believe we’re up to some sort of queer business.”

Danny heaved a big sigh as he went on to say:

“It’s all because of that pesky fault I’ve always

* See the first volume of this series entitled “*Trail Blazers of the Skies, or Across to Paris, and Back.*”

had, which my Dad called 'procrastination'—that's the gink who threw me down, and it wasn't the first time he did the trick, not by a long sight. It's a wonder you haven't gone back on such a bonehead of a pal long before now."

"I'm not going to throw you any bouquets, Danny, old scout; but once and for all understand I'm mighty well satisfied with my right bower, and wouldn't make a change for the smartest trick flier in the country. Now don't ever let me hear you talking like that again. Give me your opinion of this new lock I picked out. It has a key for each of us."

When this had been done, with Danny radiant over the fact that his comrade's loyalty and belief in him had not swerved a particle, Amos introduced him to the sharp-eyed but unassuming individual who was taking the day job of guarding the hangar and its valuable contents.

"We will be coming and going during the day," Amos explained to this man whom he called Durland, "and I want you to know my pal, Danny, so it will be all right if he opens the hangar at any time. Tonight I'll leave you or your mate the key that opens this little compartment at the side of our shack, which holds a couple of mighty useful fire extinguishers. There's no telling when such things may be needed, either in our hangar, or upon some other close by."

Danny, hearing his comrade say this, raised his heavy eyebrows to indicate surprise, and looked

curiously at Amos, as though he might be muttering under his breath:

“Now, I wonder what he means by saying that! Does he suspect something or other that he hasn’t seen fit to whisper in my ear? Amos is always two jumps or more ahead of me in the game, an’ I never seem able to catch up.”

CHAPTER III

DISQUIETING NEWS

"I'LL hurry over to the telegraph office, and get that wire off my chest," said Amos, when they were once more in the city. "Then I'll look you up at our favorite restaurant, where we'll take a snack. There are several little things we ought to talk over, now that we know the time's so close at hand for us to get busy once more."

"Gee whiz!" whimpered Danny, "I'm so happy I could give a *whoop*, only for fear some frisky cop'd run me in for a wild-eyed I. W. W. primed with bootleg stuff, and ready for any sort of mischief."

"Please keep yourself under control," pleaded his comrade; "it would be the toughest sort of luck if I had to hold over, so as to get you out of the hoosegow, and so keep Mr. Carstairs waiting another day."

"Oh, I'll promise to be good, and restrain my exuberant feelings—at least until we're up close to a steep cloud ceiling of a few thousand feet, where a feller c'n yell his head off if he wants to, and never risk any danger of bein' run into the calaboose. See you later, then, Amos; and

say, seems like my ferocious appetite's come back on account of that bully good news we got this morning. We must celebrate with a fried chicken dinner. Once we get started south-bound, there'll be no tellin' what awful stuff we'll have to put up with for grub—these Mexicans, and the Spanish-Americans south of Panama make everything so fiery hot with cayenne pepper, you remember."

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do, Danny. I'll hop off now, and get my errands all done for the day, so we can take in that picture this afternoon, which we've been waiting to see for so long—*The Big Parade*."

An hour or more later, the two fliers found themselves seated under the eye of their favorite waiter, and being bountifully helped to a glorious feast, to which they did full justice.

"What did you wire the Captain?" asked Danny, after he had taken off the "raw edge" of his appetite, and felt more like talking.

"Simply said we'd see him, come rain or shine, on the seventeenth, message to be repeated so as to make certain. You see Mr. Carstairs has got us into extravagant habits, with his wish that we spare no expense in making things absolutely correct."

"And what about taking on a full supply of gas and oil?" continued Danny.

"That's all been arranged for tomorrow morning," he was assured.

"I suppose it's to be just plain every-day gas this time, eh, Amos?"

"You're referring now, I reckon, to that particular non-explosive brand we used at the time we started from San Francisco Bay, to cross over to Japan on a non-stop flight.* No necessity for anything like that on this jaunt, I understand—fact is, our greatest trouble will be in getting enough of even the poorest kind of fuel, when once we strike down along that densely wooded and almost uninhabited Brazilian jungle."

"Oh! well, with your grand luck, Amos, I'm not going to worry about troubles that may never strike us."

"Sensible lad you are getting to be, Danny Cooper, for a fact. Have this last drumstick, done to a turn by the greatest *chef* in all San Diego?"

"Wish I could, but I want to keep a little room for the big wedge of pie I've got my mind set on. I've been picking up so fast I must weigh ten pounds more'n ever before in all my life; but then I figger on losin' it soon after I get to settin' my teeth in some of the strange dishes we'll strike down in South America—fried monkey, or armadillo steaks; fricasseed iguana, mebbe, which I understand is a big lizard that the boys out in the Philippines got to likin' right smart. Wow! we're goin' to introduce our little unsuspectin'

* See the second volume of this series, entitled "*Spanning the Pacific, or A Non-Stop Hop to Japan.*"

tummies to some queer stuff in the near days to come."

"I'm not losing any sleep over it," affirmed Amos. "What others can take on we ought to be able to digest; and who knows? We may yet grow so fond of those same dishes of the tropics that we'll often sigh for such delicacies in times to come."

The boys spent a care-free afternoon at the movie matinée, thrilled by the vastness and stirring action of the famous film that somehow they had up to then never been able to see unfolded before their eager eyes.

Then they made another trip to the flying field. Danny was overjoyed over the prospect that his eyes would presently be feasting on new scenes which would take the place of those familiar ones of which he professed himself "dead tired."

"I'm yearnin' for my first glimpse of those towerin' Andes—anxious to see if they *do* overcap some of the biggest peaks in our own Rockies, or the ones we glimpsed up in the Canadian Northwest when we ran up that way last Fall. Besides, there's that queer beast of burden they call a llama, and the monster bird of all countries, the condor!"

Amos grinned on hearing this.

"Don't be too certain, Danny, you'll enjoy making the acquaintance of that condor, which has got our common vulture beaten all to smash. Why, I can remember that just an ordinary

white-headed old eagle mother gave us both one of the biggest thrills ever. Just think of the damage a huge bird could do by getting smashed in our propeller, and sending us down from the clouds in a messy crash."

"Hot dog! I forgot the danger part," acknowledged the other, quickly. "Besides, I remember readin' only a few weeks ago in a magazine about a venturesome airman down in South America who was attacked by a whole flock of condors that seemed to think his crate must be one of those whoppin' big rocs Sindbad the Sailor and Baron Munchausen wrote about."

"A whole bunch of them, eh?" observed the interested Amos. "I'd say that must have been a pretty hot quarter for an aviator to find himself in. Did he manage to escape?—but then he must have, or else the story never could have been sprung on the reading public."

"He got clear," admitted Danny Cooper, "by great good luck, and heaps of nose dives, as well as dodgin' round corners. The furious birds just swooped at him right and left, so it kept him guessin' which way to duck next. Zowie! excuse me from bein' caught in such a pickle as that—one eagle came near knockin' our chip off; but a dozen, and giant condors at that, would be just twelve too many. I meant seein' 'em at a distance, you know—we'll carry our bully binoculars along, of course, and take in all the great sights as we go over the rise."

Everything seemed to be running along as usual at the aviation grounds. Planes were continually coming and going, with flying instructors giving their charges the benefit of their varied experience, and, by slow degrees, getting them advanced to the point where it would be safe to allow them to take off alone, on a solo flight, and show what they were capable of doing.

Even as the two pals crossed over to where their hangar was located it chanced that the air-mail from the East came along. Danny stopped to watch the landing, and his chum could hear him mutter, with a touch of disgust in his voice:

"Hay-wire stuff—not in the same class with what my pal used to do every time *he* dropped down from the clouds. He wouldn't have smashed an egg in the landin'."

"Shut up on that stuff, Danny," chided the other, not without feeling more or less satisfaction, however, in knowing that he still held a high place in the regard of his running mate. "That chap is a mighty good pilot, and has never met with a single accident worth mentioning since he took my place last Spring. They say he's bound to make his mark yet in the service. There are a whole lot of things to consider besides a safe landing. Hello! Dud! how are things treating you these fine days?"

The veteran of French and Belgian battlefields grinned cordially as he nodded to the pair, who

had always been great favorites of his from the time they first came west.

"Same as always, and nothing much new, save that I've got some fairly clever lads working with me these days. Hope you had good news this morning, boys, and that whatever you're looking for has come bumpin' along the track."

Danny glanced at his pal and nodded his head.

"Told you he'd be on to the game that far, anyway, Amos," he grunted.

Upon which the flying instructor chuckled.

"I see things, and can guess there's a nigger in the woodpile," he said, "but it's none of my business. I'm dead certain it's O.K. with you two bright boys; especially when you're hooked up with the man who wears that French medal of honor, won in the big scrap over there. Some of these fine days I'm expectin' you to open up and tell me some mighty thrilling stuff. But until then I'm just a clam."

The chums went back to town again, and found various opportunities to compare notes, so as to make doubly sure they had forgotten nothing that could be carried along on their next great venture into the Unknown. Danny breathed a bit easier to know that apparently only two more nights remained for him to toss on his hitherto comfortable bed, his mind too full of vivid fancies for him to get proper sleep.

Everything was going along like clockwork, and neither of the boys anticipated a break of

any sort when they started off for the flying field with several of their old-time mates who still stuck to the service of Uncle Sam. These men were deeply interested in new developments in aviation, as reported in the papers.

The bad weather on the Atlantic had about put a full stop to all ambitious efforts and plans for bold pilots to make the flight across. But in the latest attempt, a girl traveled in the cockpit with an experienced pilot, and nearly met with disaster, the plane having fallen into the sea when two-thirds of the way over. Their lives were miraculously saved by the fortunate arrival of a tramp steamer which landed them on the Azores.

Nevertheless, there was always fresh and astonishing news, as well as many rumors of things being done in secret. If these chaps were endeavoring to coax Amos or Danny to give them some clue to what they had been doing during all those past months since they threw up their jobs with the Post Office Department, they had all their trouble for their pains. Neither offered the slightest scrap of information.

When they drew near the hangar, Amos made a discovery that aroused a shade of suspicion in his mind.

"Wonder why both of those men I hired are standing close to our hangar, and evidently waiting for us to show up?" he ventured.

"Something must have happened since yester-

day," suggested Danny, uneasily. "The doors seem shut as usual, and no signs of anything having been busted, that I can see. But we'll soon know, for they're coming to meet us right now."

Amos could see signs of brooding trouble in the faces of the detectives. One of them—the night operator—had his right hand bound up, as though he might have been injured.

"What's gone wrong, Cosgrove?" the pilot asked him, upon which the operator made a wry face, as though his hand had given him a sudden pain, and then hastened to explain in a low but perfectly audible voice.

"Well, sir, I expected to keep a sharp watch for any skulker in any one of four directions; but hang me if ever I dreamed of one dropping down from a clear sky. Yet that was just what happened."

"Tell us about it!" snapped Amos, all attention.

"First of all, was any injury done to our plane?" asked Danny, wishing to make his mind easy on that score.

"Not a scratch, sir; but there's no telling what would have come about if I hadn't kept my eye peeled. It was a few minutes after three in the morning, you see. The old moon had poked in sight about midnight. Then I heard the droning of a motor overhead, and caught a glimpse of a plane dropping down.

"Knowing that the rules of the field did not

allow landing outside certain limits, I was a bit surprised when I saw it swooping down straight at me. Then, sir, it seemed to slow up when not more than thirty feet aloft, and I could see the head of a man sticking over the cockpit. After that the plane sped on again, rising in a quick series of spirals to disappear in the haze. It was then I discovered that the flat roof of the hangar had been set afire!"

CHAPTER IV

ALL READY FOR THE TAKE-OFF

Amos involuntarily glanced at the rough bandage which Cosgrove had hastily and clumsily wrapped round his lower right arm.

"You managed to get the blaze under control, evidently, after opening our little cubbyhole here, and snatching out the chemical fire extinguisher we've always kept there so handy?" he remarked, quickly.

"Sure thing, Mr. Green," responded the other, with a grin. "Worked like magic, too, as soon as I turned it on that nasty blaze. Some of the boys who'd been waked up by the startled shout I gave on first discovering that the roof of the hangar was ablaze, ran up. But it was all over in less'n five minutes."

"And it looks as though you managed to burn your arm while putting out the fire, eh, Cosgrove?" continued Amos.

"Doesn't amount to much, I guess, sir," replied the guard, although at the same time he shrank from the hand Danny put out to gently touch the covered member.

"That'll not be soon forgotten, Cosgrove. I'll try to show our appreciation of your promptness

and vigilance by leaving some substantial sum with your employer. And if you have to get a surgeon to take care of your arm, be sure and send his bill to *me*. But what did the boys who came running up think of the queer happening, do you know?"

"Said it was an outrage," the guard explained, "and that if only they knew who was guilty of such an unsportsman-like trick, they'd give him a good coat of tar and feathers."

"Of course you had to tell them about the other plane?" suggested Amos.

"No other way to explain how a fire came about up there on the hangar roof at three in the morning. They couldn't understand how that material, believed to be fireproof, went into a blaze right away."

"I'm going up the ladder you put there, and examine things for myself," announced young Green, suiting his action to the word.

A crowd of aviators and others had gathered close by, and all were vastly interested in the matter. Knowing Amos and his peculiarities as they did, no one ventured to thrust himself into the little confab; but nevertheless curious eyes followed the young ex-mail pilot as he made his way up the ladder.

He spent a few minutes closely examining the spot where the fire had started. If there were anything to be found out, Amos was the one who could pick up a clue, as Danny confidently be-

lieved. Finally, the other came down the ladder.

"It beats the Dutch how that acid, or whatever it was, dropped on our hangar, started to set the roof afire," he told Danny.

"No mistake about it bein' a dirty, low-down trick to try and destroy our whole outfit, eh, what?" grumbled the navigator.

"That goes without saying," came the stern reply, while the face of the *Pathfinder's* pilot clouded with perplexity. "It's going to be a three days' job, though, to figure out just what was the reason for his cowardly action."

"Huh! on a par with stabbing a man in the back, I take it," grunted Danny, disgustedly.

Cosgrove drew Amos aside, and said something in a low tone. Danny, chancing to turn his gaze that way, believed he saw the wounded guard put a small object in the hand of his pal, who looked closely at it, and then hid it in his pocket.

"Somethin' doin', seems like," chuckled wise Danny, who did not seem to think it strange for Amos to keep his knowledge or suspicions to himself; when the right opportunity came along, it was absolutely certain that he would take his comrade into the secret.

"Let's take a look inside, and make certain there was no damage done to our bus," suggested Amos, lightly, as though he had thrown an incubus off his chest, and was feeling himself again.

This was speedily accomplished, and Danny,

who had been oppressed by indefinable fears, breathed easier once more.

Realizing that they desired to be left alone, neither of the guards, nor any of the other aviators, followed the pair into the hangar.

"As right as could be, and ready for a flight any minute," announced Danny, cheerfully—this remark was meant as a "feeler," for somehow Danny felt more than half convinced his comrade was revolving some project in his mind.

"I'm going to leave the job of getting the fuel aboard to you, Danny," announced the pilot, presently, as though his mind had been made up with his customary promptness.

"Just so," observed Danny; "a full house, and all the oil we'll need for our little spin—is that the program, Amos, old scout?"

"Yes, you attend to the telephoning, and tell them to hustle the stuff out here as fast as they can, Danny."

"Sure thing," the other assured him.

"I reckon we ought to get through by two this afternoon," said the pilot.

"Sure."

"It's a fine, sunny day, too, pardner."

"Regular California weather, for a fact," grinned Danny.

"All right then—we hop off at two, Danny."

"This same afternoon, you mean, Amos?"

"That's the ticket," his chum said, in a low tone, since even hangar walls might have ears;

and the boys seemed to be surrounded by somber mysteries. "We needn't try to make port by evening, you know, for these December days are short. Easy enough to drop down at some way-station, and wait over for another morning."

"I get you, boss," Danny Cooper told him, with glistening eyes, and the flush of eagerness on his freckled face. "Huh! any old airport'd be a heap safer for our crowd, seems like, than this same roost, where they swoop down in the moonlight, and drop some queer burning fluid on your hangar, just like it used to be over there with the Germans."

"I'm off to town to settle up some accounts, and pick up our papers, which we must have, since they cover the field of our new activities. Look for me any old time. Keep both guards with you to hold the crowd back while you're receiving the gas. Leave everything else to my charge, Danny."

The other was only too glad to have Amos say this, because he knew very well nothing worth mentioning would be neglected by such a thorough worker. Accordingly Amos turned back to town, taking a taxi that chanced to be convenient. He went to the post office to pick up any mail, possibly the last they would handle for quite a stretch of time; then visited the offices of the detective agency, and had a chat with his friend, the manager. He made sure to leave a suitable reward for Cosgrove, and referred the

manager to Mr. Carstairs, should any further expense be incurred in the treatment of the injuries the man had received in saving the hangar from fire.

So expeditiously did Amos manage these various things that he was back on the well-remembered aviation field by one, having also partaken of a little cold lunch at what Danny always called the "snatch and run" restaurant that they sometimes patronized.

He brought back some sandwiches and a bottle of ice-cold milk to satisfy Danny's appetite, since the other would be much too busily employed to be able to get food for himself.

"No need of thinking about grub this time," he told his pal, when handing these things over to him. "We'll land early enough to fill up somehow or other."

"Right-o, Amos," chortled the other, his mouth already full of ham and bread. "Even if we did have to go without a bite tonight I reckon we'd be all the better for holdin' off a grub-stake—been stuffin' ourselves now for three or four months, as though we were Thanksgiving turkeys down on a farm."

Amos smiled, knowing only too well that Danny was always most unhappy when compelled to listen to the abject groaning of an empty stomach.

Amos went out to have a brief chat with the two guards, who had kept the crowd of curious

sightseers away from the endangered hangar. He explained to Cosgrove what arrangements he had effected with his "boss," and paid double the agreed-upon sum. Such a free-spending backer as Mr. Carstairs saw that his friends' pockets were always well lined. There was always plenty of ready cash in the bank to their credit, which represented the proceeds of the original wager made by the ex-aviator and his wealthy friend, Mr. Bristol. The sum had been turned over to the pair after they had completed their jump to Paris and back. Money was the least of the chums' troubles in these halcyon days.

As there was not a cloud in the bright azure sky (so typical of Southern California most of the year), Danny hummed joyously to himself as he kept tabs on the number of gallons of gas that were put in the tanks. Finally he called a halt to the operation.

"Plumb full to our carryin' limit," he announced.

And so Paymaster Amos settled with the men who had been in charge. The latter gave the boys a friendly nod, and wished them much luck; for, by certain indications, they understood that some trip beyond the usual run was about to be started.

Both the chums busied themselves for a short time in testing indicators, gadgets, and such things that went to make up the "furniture" of the plane. Everything was in perfect condition.

"This sure is the queerest ever," Danny commented, scratching his frowsy head, as was his wont when trying to solve a puzzle.

"Queer, I'll admit that," Amos told him; "but don't forget that we once had something similar happen before. Right here it was, too, on the shore of San Diego Bay, from the waters of which we dragged the dripping chap after he'd taken one nose-dive too many."

Danny grinned, and nodded his head.

"Why, it seems as though I'd forgotten about that wild Mexican patriot Señor—what was his name, now?" he burst out.

"Señor Capitan José Murcado. Not a bad sort of chap, after all, when you came to know him," remarked Amos.

"Got the crazy notion," continued Danny, "in his noodle that because we had a fine plane, and used to go off on mysterious expeditions every so often, we must be the hated '*gringos*' who were said to be helping the rebels down in his country. What does he do but spin up here, bein' some-thin' of an airman himself, bent on droppin' a bomb on our hangar, and stoppin' that sort of funny business. But after we saved his life he regretted his action, knowin' he'd made a big blunder. Then he owned up to everything before he cut for the Rio Grande. But, anyway, you know all that."

"You see," continued Amos, whimsically, "we've had so many experiences that somehow

we're likely to overlook a few things occasionally. Well, since there isn't a blessed thing waiting to be attended to, and as our horse is getting restless for action, what do you say we get a move on, and have the ship trundled over to the runway?"

"Make it unanimous while you're about it, pardner," was the only comment the usually voluble Danny allowed himself to make. Possibly at this starting stage of their new adventure Danny was beginning to realize that it was bound to be no mere little pleasure jaunt. The chances of their never coming back were about fifty-fifty.

Once again was the staunch *Pathfinder* pulled and pushed over to the long runway, where so many times the aviators had hopped off on their regular mail route, never dreaming that astounding victories over time and space, sea and mountains, deserts and plains, were in the near future to be theirs.

CHAPTER V

THE LAY-OVER AT TUCSON

THE take-off was absolutely perfect. However, this was to be expected when Amos manipulated the controls. He pushed open the throttle, knowing that the stream of gas jetting into the motor would certainly straighten the plane out. As the cylinders began to pound under the sudden flood of fuel, the cloud-chaser started like a flash, and rushed with constantly accelerated pace down the runway.

Even above the thunder of motor and spinning propeller, Danny was able to catch the wild cheers that broke from the crowd watching the hop-off. He grinned happily when he heard a few lines of aviator doggerel, bellowed after them by some of those fine airmen and their helpers:

“Good-by, Amos—Danny—see you later!”

They started to climb immediately after turning the nose of the plane skyward, and were soon high above the airport so familiar to their memories. The sun was back of them when Amos circled and headed into the east. A vast and wonderful panorama stretched out for many miles in every direction. Geographical details lay spread before them—lovely valleys and grim

mountains; cities and farms; heaving ocean views; and distant faint blue heights ahead that bespoke the outlying spurs of the Sierra Nevadas, lying between the orange-growing, irrigated sections so green and lovely.

It was an old, but always pleasant picture for these two ex-mail pilots to feast their eyes on as they left mile after mile behind them. In the days that lay in the past they had only been able to communicate, owing to the racket of motor and propeller, by means of signs, or hastily scribbled notes that were passed back and forth as they changed the handling of the throttle. Then, when common sense dictated that Amos chuck overboard his unreasonable prejudice against the ear-phone arrangement that had begun to take its place in all modern up-to-date planes, they no longer had to keep mute while underway, but could chat with ease, and confer when sudden puzzles had to be solved.

"I notice that you are hugging our old course over the top," said Danny, after they had been on their way for some time.

"Can you beat it?" demanded his pal.

"Best there is, so far as I know," admitted the other; "only I hope that now we won't have the bad luck to run foul of that fightin' eagle we had trouble with that time last Spring."

"Don't worry," replied the pilot, while Danny squatted in his rear cubbyhole like a strange species of toad—he always seemed to assume an

awkward posture, although it was comfortable to him. "Besides, Danny," Amos continued, "she had her nestlings to think about and protect, and like as not believed our plane was some unknown sort of giant coming to gobble them up. Then, too, it's likely she's been shot since then—some Johnnies who are going up with gypsy pilots these days insist on taking a rifle along, in hopes of bagging some sort of big game. And a real, white-headed eagle looks pretty good to their greedy eyes."

"Well," Danny went on to say, as he vividly recalled the adventure, "that was once when my mind went bizz. It was so sudden, so unexpected, and the danger of her fouling our propeller, or breaking the wing of a plane in her crazy dashes seemed so great. But, Amos, if that mysterious pilot who tried to snuff out our gay sky-blazing plane could do all that Cosgrove said he did, he wasn't such a fool of an airman."

"Far from it—equal to the best, rather, and able to carry on," replied the other, as though not averse to having one of their little chats, so as to draw Danny out, and see what he suspected, if anything.

"I c'n picture it all as plain as anything, though of course I'm unable to imagine who the man was Cosgrove said he could see leaning over the coaming of the cockpit. When I think of him speeding down with a wild swoop, hoverin' over our hangar a few seconds like a hawk pickin'

out a nice fish for his dinner, and then going upward again like a flash, d'ye known what it makes me think of, Amos?"

"Shoot!" the other said tersely, as though he might be sparing his breath.

"Remember that picture we saw t'other day in an illustrated section of a paper, where the latest trick in aviation was bein' shown with a plane in flight snatching a suspended mail-sack off a little framework out in an open field, and so keeping on without a stop?"

"I remember it all right, Danny," said Amos. "We both agreed at the time that new ideas were hustling along red-hot. But you might expect that to be coming to scratch any old time. Many years ago railroads began to have their fast trains pick up water for the engine from long narrow tanks planted in the center of the road-bed for about a mile or so, and in that way saved stopping, with its loss of time, as well as wear and tear on the locomotive."

"And as easy as fallin' off a fence, I take it," declared Danny. "Let me say once again that we're livin' in wonderful days, Amos, and it begins to look like nothing might be impossible, 'cept to create life itself."

"Why, one scientist claims to have done that already in a small way, with a jellyfish, or something like that," Amos told him.

"Gosh!" gasped Danny as he scratched his head—he seemed utterly overpowered by the

magnitude of the information thus vouchsafed by his chum, whose reading was much wider than his own.

After that both remained silent for some time, while they continued to cut off the miles ceaselessly, always heading into the southeast. The grim desert was left behind and a wild sector of country was struck where there were rocky defiles that looked as though they might be the abiding place of grizzly bears and cougars.

As Amos seemed disposed to keep up his work of handling the running end of the business, Danny presently started to indulge in one of his favorite amusements when not too far distant from Mother Earth. He picked up the pair of superb binoculars with which they had long since been presented by their admirer and warm friend, Mr. Carstairs, and scanned the scenery over which they were passing.

So the time passed, with the plane speeding along, and working as steadily and beautifully as any watch that was ever fashioned by the most expert Swiss workman. Amos, it could plainly be seen, was pleased beyond words at its continual hum and drone—with him that sound was ecstatic music; and had there at any moment come the slightest discord his ears would have detected it instantly.

The westering sun presently began to warn the travelers that before long day must be giving place to darkness.

"Got any idea where you'd want to pull up for the night?" queried the observer, later on, as though he had noticed that Amos was changing his course, and heading more into the south, as though he had some definite idea in view.

"Tucson," was the terse reply.

"Been there before, I take it, and know the ropes, eh, pardner?"

"Know a bit, which isn't saying much; but there's a fairly good place for a landing, and a decent hotel meant for tourists; though I reckon we may have to rough it, and camp alongside our bus, so as to protect it from pillagers. You find them everywhere."

"Well, I can figure that if we kept on going it would mean a forced landing in the dark at some small town where we'd be likely to get into a mess. On the whole, I think you're just about right in making it a short spin. About three hundred and fifty miles, I figger it. That was the Gila River we were following a while back, wasn't it?"

"Just what it was—a branch of the Colorado, noted for its poisonous reptiles. Be at Tucson right away now—lies just beyond that little stumpy range dead ahead. It'll be getting a bit dusky down below by the time we strike earth. Leaves us something like twelve hundred to do tomorrow; but we'll tear that off like fun, with an early morning start."

"Just what we'll do," asserted confident

Danny. If Amos had made his declaration three times as strong, his faithful pal and sincere admirer would have been just as emphatic in backing him up; for he believed the other to be next door to infallible.

Amos made no mistake when he told the other that the place where they figured to stop off nestled on the further side of some squat hills that people of the plains would have dignified by the appellation of "mountains." Presently the aviator glimpsed buildings.

"I'd say the old town has taken on something of a small boom since I last dropped in here from the clouds," remarked Amos, as they drew sufficiently close to make out things. "You know it's a regular nest of weak-lungers who make a practice of camping out on the burning plain here, and find a heap of relief from their troubles. They have to stay around, because they'd have a relapse if they were to go where the air is a bit chilly."

"Well, *we're* not here for our health, are we?" chuckled Danny.

"Don't be too sure about that, boy," Amos told him. "We left San Diego aviation field in something of a hurry, remember, with an unknown and unscrupulous enemy striking cowardly blows at our plane, which I consider part of ourselves. All right—then we *are* here for our health, if you figure it that way."

"Say, they've got a pretty good stretch of level

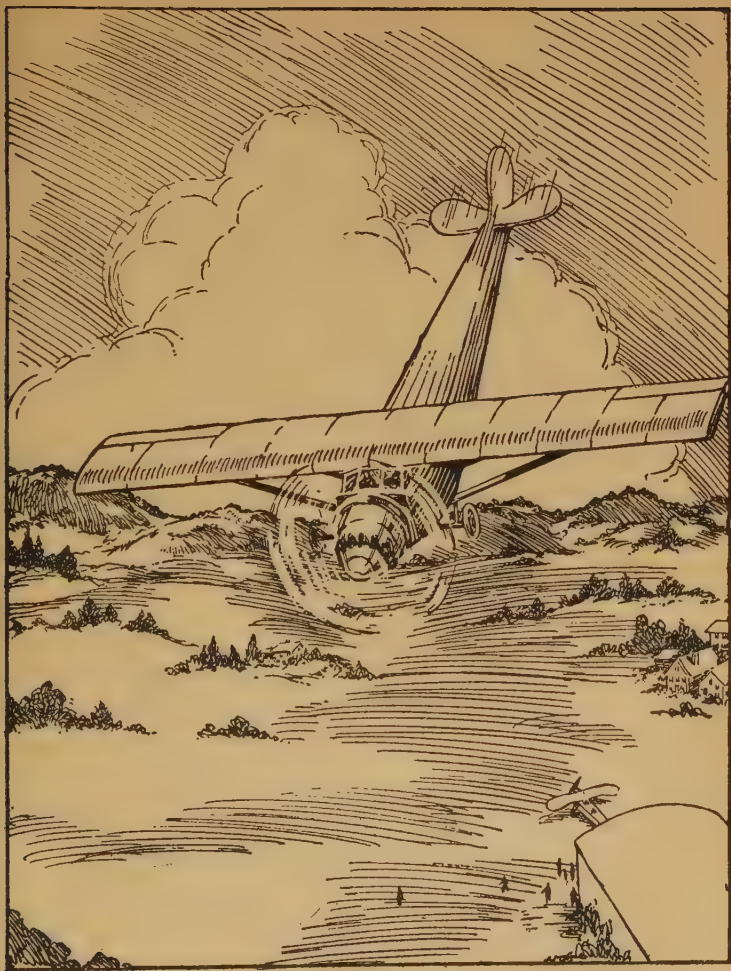
ground outside the village, and I can see a few hangars scattered around. Good enough for our landing-stage; but we'll see later how we're going to get away decently with the whacking big load we're toting along."

"Stands to reason, Danny, that where planes come down they've just got to go up again, sooner or later. Yes, they had a runway, slipshod enough, I confess, when I dropped in here some years back; but then times have changed, and towns can't afford to hang back, if they want to find themselves on the map. We'll get going all right when the time comes, never fear."

He started to drop down lower and lower, with both of them searching the open ground for signs to tell where the best place for a landing might be found.

"I can see men running," snapped Danny, still making use of the glasses. "Yes, and now they're signaling to boot. That must be the regular landing-place, Amos. Hope we can find an empty hangar that we could hire for one night only, because I'd like to take a look-in at the old town, with its picturesque Indians hanging around the station ready to pose to tourists at so much per pose. We just couldn't leave the crate unguarded—they say these noble redmen gobble up everything that's left outdoors nights; so that the folks have to lock up even their door-mats for safety."

Nothing exciting about that particular land-



He started to drop down lower and lower.

ing, which went off as "smooth as silk," as Danny called it. If any of the gathered crowd had anticipated one of those "hay-wire," helter-skelter descents such as clumsy pilots sometimes make, they must have been dreadfully disappointed.

A man bustled up who seemed vested with some authority. Amos handled him the right way to appease his vanity, and soon made another friend who was proud indeed to tell him all he wished to know. He found an empty hangar in which the *Pathfinder* could be housed overnight, and then insisted on the two airmen—whom he recognized from "the cut of their job" as professional pilots of the Government service—to join him in a little supper at a restaurant he could recommend as "gilt-edged."

What the boys ate was not at all bad, and both heartily enjoyed their meal; but Danny kept wondering why the gentleman who had constituted himself their host continued to eye them closely.

CHAPTER VI

THE LETTERS ON THE HELMET

THE aviators and their host chatted on various topics connected with aviation and kindred subjects. More than once Danny noted that shrewd look on the face of Mr. Andrew Bailey, as the other called himself.

"Now, I sure do wonder what's eatin' this chap," Danny was saying to himself, a bit uneasily. "Hope he hasn't got any slick game up his sleeve, and figures on holdin' us up here as suspicious characters. From the way Amos is tellin' him a few things about how we're connected with Mr. Carstairs, and his ownin' up that he's even met that gent some time in the past, and knows his universal reputation as a clean sportsman—there, hang it if he isn't even showing the man a letter from the Captain that doesn't tell anything to give away our game, but shows what the boss thinks of Amos. That rather fetches Mr. Bailey, for now he's chuckling like he begins to see a nigger in the wood-pile."

Sure enough, wise Amos, who had himself easily detected the unusual interest their host seemed to feel in him particularly, had taken

“the bull by the horns,” and caused Mr. Bailey to turn right-about-face.

“Listen, boys!” the latter was saying between chuckles, “I begin to see that the joke’s on me after all. I admit that while having a bit of a reputation for shrewdness there have been a few times in my career as a member of Uncle Sam’s Secret Service when I’ve sized things up dead wrong, and come near to making a grand mess.”

“Hot dog!” ejaculated Danny, round-eyed with wonder, “I just reckoned there was something queer about your sudden deep interest in my pard; and I bet thirty cents now you took him for another guy that never had the clean reputation Amos Green sports—how about that, sir?”

“Just what happened, Danny,” returned the other, laughingly. “His name is Adolph Granger—just the same initials, you’ll notice, that your pal carries on that old well-worn leather helmet he sported when first I saw him.”

Before leaving their plane safely housed both lads had of course doffed their greasy dungarees, so as to look respectable while eating supper with their new friend. Amos had abandoned that shamefully soiled leather helmet which had accompanied him on various long air voyages.

“Strange what coincidences do spring up sometimes, sir,” he told Mr. Bailey, unconcernedly, so far as outward appearances went; but with a sense of relief deep down in his heart;

for the idea of any delay overtaking them just when on the eve of starting forth upon another of their thrilling trips was repugnant to Amos.

"That isn't all, my son," continued the other, blandly. "To tell you the honest truth, there does seem to be a little resemblance, in a general way, between this wild blade—who's made himself such a reputation as a swindler, and conveyor of aliens across the Mexican border—and yourself. I've got a newspaper picture of him with me—a poor one, of course; but you may discover a faint resemblance—enough, when added to those significant initials on your headgear, to make me believe I had run across my man, plying his lawless trade as a smuggler of undesirable aliens."

"Caught with the goods," chuckled the amused Danny, "which means that under the skin I might be his sand-bag passenger—mebbe a Chink in disguise, or a fierce anarchist from Russia, tryin' to crash Uncle Sam's back door."

Amos took a good look at the creased newspaper clipping, but did not appear to be deeply interested.

"Not a bit flattering to me, I must say, Mr. Bailey," he observed, stiffly. "I'd hate to feel that I had such a sly, crafty look on my face as shows here. He's got the stamp of a bad one, I reckon."

"As crafty and smart a worker as we've ever had to handle," admitted the agent; "he's been

able to give us the laugh on many a previous occasion. We discovered by chance that he had learned to be a fairly good aviator, and was doing great stunts along the Grande, carrying aliens across at so much per. I mean to clamp the irons on M'sieur Adolph—for he's really of French descent, you know—or get out of the service as a has-been."

Danny, who had been carefully studying the picture, and then staring hard at his chum, now gave his opinion.

"Just as you say, sir, there is some resemblance in a general way—enough to make you take notice and grow suspicious. Then, with those letters as a give-away I don't blame you for thinking you had run across your slick smuggler. We've been suspected of a good many things in our travels, and for one I'm gettin' hardened to bein' taken for a Hindoo, Chink, Italian Black-Hand man, or such riff-raff. As long as my conscience is clean, I'm willin' to stand for anything you like."

The clouds of suspicion having thus been cleared away, the party spent some time in pleasant conversation. It turned out that Mr. Bailey was very well acquainted with another member of the Secret Service with whom the boys had had some dealings. And so, Amos felt constrained to tell him in a guarded fashion just how confident Silas Gregg made a fool of himself on a certain aviation field in the East, after they

had landed from a long and dangerous trip.

"Clever bloodhound Silas is, to boot," laughed Mr. Bailey. "I'll twig him about that wise crack when I get back to Headquarters; which will not be until I can have company in the person of Adolph."

"Huh!" snorted Danny, with a wild grin, "I reckon now you won't be in such a hurry to explain just how you met Amos Green and Danny Cooper, the Damon and Pythias pals of the cloud-chaser crowd, eh, Mr. Bailey?"

"Just what I will do, Danny," the other assured him. "I can laugh even when the joke is on me, something Gregg was never known to do. Now, I don't know a thing about the business you're in, but if you're tied up with such a fine man as you've shown me I'm dead certain everything is all correct. Fact is, I can tell that much after having been in your company two whole hours. I'll have to say good night to you now, for I must get busy following up a certain clue I had yesterday, and which took me out this afternoon to the landing grounds. As like as not I'll spend the whole night there on the watch for a certain plane to drop down in some obscure corner, with a contraband cargo of some sort aboard, and with Adolph handling the throttle."

That was the last Amos and his pal were to see of the genial gentleman, for they planned to make an early start in the morning in order to reach New Orleans while daylight held. These

were the short December days, they recollected, when the sun set at half-past four.

The night was so hot that the boys decided to sleep in the hangar beside their beloved plane. Somehow Amos seemed to feel a bit dubious as to the wisdom of leaving things entirely unprotected, and seeking the hotel Mr. Bailey had recommended.

If trouble could drop down out of the clear heavens in a place so well policed as the aviation field at San Diego, what might not happen at Tucson, Arizona? Already they had learned how this place, so close to the border, was being used as a rendezvous by unscrupulous and law-breaking smugglers, in fetching across undesirables.

"We can't afford to take any chances at this early stage of the game," was the assertion of Amos, when explaining why he felt this would be the right thing for them to do. "Of course, it isn't going to be as soft a bed as at the hotel, but we're old campaigners, so we can stand a few hard knocks—in the interest of science, you know."

Danny grinned good-naturedly on hearing this.

"Sure thing, old pal," he went on to say, as usual agreeing with his mate. "It's all in a noble cause, we've got to remember. If you *will* choose to follow the course of science and work for the betterment of your fellows, you've got to rub up against whatever tough lines you strike. And by skipping a night in one of these warm

country hotels there's no tellin' what you *do* escape—I've been through the mill, and I know."

Accordingly, they sought the open field outside of town, and found the hangar to which they had been given the key when paying for its use for one night.

Here the aviators proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as their limited accommodations permitted.

They could utilize the heavy coats brought along for use when climbing to lofty altitudes in passing over the peaks of the Andes (where heavy snow lay all the year round), and blankets which would make soft enough beds.

Morning came along and found them a bit stiff—for lately they had been sleeping luxuriously on downy couches in the furnished room they leased in San Diego. Consequently, they found themselves a little "soft;" but that would soon wear off, leaving them capable of standing any sort of punishment without flinching.

First of all they locked the garage and sought the same eating-place where they had supped on the preceding evening with Mr. Bailey. Here a cup or two of coffee put them in good fighting trim. Danny declared he felt in "apple-pie" shape, and ready to tackle any kind of a tough job that came along.

"Just got a nice little run of twelve hundred or so today, Amos, which we'll enjoy to the limit. Crossing over such a big state as Texas is a fair

day's flight in itself at ordinary speed. Then there's the balance of Arizona, all of New Mexico, and part of Louisiana, till we see the Mississippi at flood, if all that surplus water hasn't passed out of the delta into the Gulf by now. This is the life for Danny Cooper, pardner!"

About half-past seven that same morning the *Pathfinder*, having been towed to the runway, took off. It proved to be no easy job to lift so heavily laden a plane after such a short run; only for the unusual cleverness of Amos in coaxing his craft to obey his will they might have come up against serious trouble. As it was, Danny held his breath for a dozen seconds when they commenced to ascend as the pilot "lifted" his charge.

"Great guns! that was a narrow squeak all right, Amos," he observed, "and I don't believe there's another pilot who could've shaved that tree as you did. My heart was a-standin' still, as I listened, fully expectin' to hear the branches rippin' our new-fangled landin' gear, wheels, pontoons, and all. That would have been some calamity. But everything is lovely now, and the goose hangs high. Here we go, dead set for New Orleans, make it or bust!"

"Well, we want no busting, Danny," Amos told him complacently, as though he himself had not also had an anxious moment. "Rather than take any unnecessary chances, I'd hold over another night somewhere; for you know we're really not due until Saturday, the seventeenth."

"That's right—as a rule we always play the game of 'safety first.' All air pilots do, who live long; those that take too big chances die young."

"And we hope to become regular Methuselahs, eh, Danny?"

As they soared aloft the air became much cooler and more invigorating. Danny noticed this presently and began drawing in great breaths so as to fill his lungs with oxygen.

"Hot dog! but that Tucson sure is a torrid place, isn't it, Amos? I don't wonder the lungers like to camp out on the sand, and cook themselves. That terrific heat would make it easy for any poor sick chap to breathe; while with me it'd sap my life a whole lot. I'd call this a pretty fine view, providin' you're fond of sandy deserts, cacti, great slashes in the ground like miniature canyons of the Colorado, and such like. Me for the California orange groves, rose trees, flowers, and gardens—but then we've seen just such waste-land over in Siberia, thousands of miles of it, with camels, and wild desert riders. Besides, I figger we're bound to strike some new types of people and scenery down there in South America."

"Sure thing," was all Amos volunteered to say in reply, for he was looking after his manifold duties as pilot.

And so they presently lost all track of the town on the railroad where they had passed the night, and were heading for the border line.

CHAPTER VII

▲ NIGHT IN NEW ORLEANS

It was rough country as they crossed over into New Mexico. Amos dropped low enough to decide that they had passed the dividing line, for at the time they were following the railroad track east.

Three hours later he told Danny that he was staring down at the territory of Texas, since it had been El Paso on the Rio Grande they had just passed over.

"De-lighted to know it!" was Danny's comment; his reason for gratification being that they were by now well on the way to their distant destination.

The new engine had been functioning splendidly, and was deserving of all the praise Amos kept showering upon it—in his mind only, for he was as a rule a fellow of spare words, leaving most of the talking to his pal, whose tongue could at times "run a blue streak" as he himself candidly admitted. He did not deem it any disgrace to use what Nature had given him.

It was rather a monotonous trip, all things considered, with few novel sights calculated to make them "sit up and take notice"—quite different

from those days only a few months past when they eagerly drank in strange and thrilling pictures while passing over the vast wastes of Siberia, Manchuria, and even the deeply absorbing islands of Nippon, better known to the world as Japan.*

Even Danny wearied of seeing the same things, and was not at all sorry to have his pal at times soar farther up among the fleecy white clouds, to take advantage of some favoring current of air that he believed might help them make better time.

Noon came and went, with the drumming engine keeping up its steady roar, and the swiftly revolving propeller increasing the racket. There were times when Danny realized they were going at the rate of almost a hundred and seventy-five miles an hour, about three to the minute, which he assured himself joyously was much better than they had ever been able to coax out of the old engine. Why, this motor was fairly eating up the miles like magic. They would be able to make their landing at the Crescent City by the middle of the afternoon—if all went well.

Along about one o'clock they began to glimpse the first signs that told of the awful havoc played by the Mississippi flood, which had affected all the tributaries for hundreds of miles in every direction.

* See the preceding volume of this series, "*Masters of the Air-Lanes, or Round the World in Fourteen Days.*"

“Please drop down a bit, Amos,” Danny begged, “and let me have a squint at this country, where the flood overflowed everything, and made a terrible lake out of thousands of lovely farms and ranches.”

Amos himself had a great curiosity to see the after effects of that amazing flood, one of the greatest ever known in America since its settlement by the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth Rock. As they sped along they saw one of the most depressing sights possible—a land that had virtually been “flowing with milk and honey,” lying there almost a waste, its towns washed away, or partly in ruins, its farms made a desert, and most of the live-stock drowned.

“But just the same,” Danny at one time proudly announced, “these folks are good sports, for right now they’re as busy as beavers tryin’ to clean up after the wreck, and start off again. Say, you just *can’t* keep a good man down; and the bully old blood will tell. Come back here in five years, and I bet you’d have hard work tellin’ there’d ever been any such big flood at all. They’ll make the land smile again; and that old devil, the Mississippi, has just *got* to be made to behave, if it takes half the long green Uncle Sam’s holdin’ in his strong-box to do the trick.”

“You said it, Danny,” commented the listening Amos. “We’re over Louisiana now, and still going strong.”

"Make anchor by half-past two, I reckon, eh, Amos?"

"Easy enough. After we've seen to the crate we can find our hotel and clean up. I'd like to feel respectable again before we get into our working clothes for the big run. Unless Mr. Carstairs has found good reasons for making changes in the schedule I laid, our first two stops will be at Mexico City and Panama. Luckily, there's no need whatever of any hurry on this long cruise; we can take our time, and pick out fairly decent weather for flying, which will be a comfort."

"I should say it would," Danny exploded. "I was just thinkin' about that myself, and how different things'll be to know you don't have to be on the eternal *jump*, no matter how the storm howls, or anything else. It's going to make me feel a whole lot lighter of heart."

As they zoomed along and drew closer to the mighty river, the pitiful scenes at which they could look down all along their way grew even more forlorn. Danny was continually uttering exclamations of commiseration, for, as he kept using the powerful glasses, he was able to note the dreadful sights left in the wake of the destructive flood that escaped the occasional quick glances stolen by the busy pilot.

Two o'clock found them still with some miles to go, but Danny could manage to make out by the pall of smoke on the horizon that they were now approaching a city, undoubtedly New Or-

leans. Here would be a chance to set eyes on new and novel scenes—for him at least—and he primed himself to take it all in.

When presently he got his first glimpse of the mighty river in the near distance he found himself properly thrilled, and flooded Amos with quaint remarks that bubbled up “like a perennial fountain,” as his companion told him.

There was much black smoke over the city, coming from the soft coal used in connection with sooty Southern pine wood; but Amos was posted concerning the location of the aviation field where he planned to land, and lost no time in making for it.

Things began at once to look very familiar, for they discovered numerous air-craft coming and going, giving evidence that New Orleans was in line with other progressive communities in aviation.

Ten minutes later they were safely on the ground, with a number of greasy mechanics running up to offer their services as needed; just as the red-capped porters at the railroad terminus in big cities flock to passengers who are leaving an incoming express train.

Amos soon picked out a man who seemed to hold authority, and after a brief confab told Danny that everything had been arranged. They could engage a hangar that chanced to be unused just then, for the several days they anticipated being in the city.

Nor would they dream of leaving their beloved plane until it was securely housed and had been given a brief overhauling, so as to make certain it was in first-class trim. On another day they could have the engine and every individual strut tested, so as to make things absolutely safe.

In their civilized garb the boys made their way into the city, visiting a barber shop first of all, so as to be trimmed up, "fit for decent society," as Danny put it. After that they went to the hotel Mr. Carstairs had recommended as their headquarters when in New Orleans, a place where he had often stayed in the past.

When they registered it was noticeable that the clerk, who had been eying them a bit dubiously, suddenly beamed with friendliness; for in the names Amos had jotted down in rather a shaky hand, he undoubtedly recognized those of whom Mr. Carstairs must have written recently, and whom he expected to join there.

"Your friend will be here tomorrow, we're given to understand," he informed Amos. "Meanwhile, anything and everything is at your command. After what the gentleman who has often been a welcome guest at this house wrote about you two, we shall feel it an honor to have you with us."

Danny grinned at hearing this; but Amos showed not the slightest sign of enjoying such sort of flattery. He realized that it was not on

their own account the clerk said what he did, but because they were *protégés* of the multi-millionaire and sportsman.

They asked to be shown to their room at once, wishing to rest and clean up, after some eight hours, more or less, of exceedingly fast flying.

"Looks good to me, I'm saying," observed Danny, giving an appreciative glance at the snowy white counterpane of the double bed; and the inviting bathroom, the door of which stood open, showing an interior with all the "fixin's," as Danny would say. "Go to it, Amos, old sport, and have a wash-up; I'll squat here in this cozy chair, and look over the afternoon paper I picked up from a boy in the street. It might happen to have a few interesting items coverin' aviation matters. It's a poor day in these stirrin' times when some gent—or lady—hasn't broken into print concernin' some thrillin' project for bridgin' the high seas; jumpin' across to Australia, or some such whoppin' scheme that keeps their name before the readin' public."

"That doesn't bother me a bit, Danny," Amos told him, as he threw off his coat and vest.

"Oh! don't think I'm putting up any sort of kick about the lack of publicity," protested the other, immediately. "Fact is, the deeper I dig into this little side game of ours the better I like it. I know how fickle the public is—cheerin' to the echo, and goin' nearly crazy over a baseball idol today; and then if he chances to have a bad

week, knocking him for all that's out. Makes me sick to see it done. If any of our attempts do turn out duds, we're not goin' to be razzed by a mob of chaps who couldn't themselves do one-tenth as well."

Later on, happening to look up from the pages of his paper and glancing toward the open door of the bathroom to see how Amos was progressing, Danny became suddenly deeply interested.

Apparently Amos had finished his ablutions, for he was just then sitting on a high stool, and seemed to be fishing in one of his trousers pockets, as if searching for some object.

"Now, what's that he's pulled out, and seems to be looking over so carefully, I want to know?" muttered Danny. "Hot dog! it was into that same pocket he shoved the thing that guard, Cosgrove, handed him at the aviation field! Shucks! I'd give somethin' to know what it c'n be; but all the same I wouldn't put it up to Amos for a stack of dollars. He knows what he's doing, and there's nothing sneaky about my pal. When he thinks it's the right time to tell me what's in the wind, I'll hear all about it; so I'll just shut my eyes, and forget what I saw."

Just the same, Danny was going to find that this was easier said than done. During their long and arduous flight from one South American capital to another; across the lofty mountain chain along the western coast; over the seemingly endless green jungles stretching from the Amazon

through hundreds and hundreds of miles, he would often find himself gripped with a sense of curiosity concerning the solution of the little mystery connected with the actions of his pal, Amos.

In due time the two young fellows descended to the dining-room of the celebrated hotel, wishing to satisfy their acute hunger as soon as possible, and get through before the main body of guests came flocking on the scene.

The orchestra had not yet started the music, and so they could converse in low tones as they ate a most bountiful meal. Since, to tell the bare truth, neither of them had eaten a single bite since early that morning in Tucson, they were now in fine shape to enjoy all that was set before them. Amos backed his chum in the idea that, as they must soon be forced to live off the country as they proceeded deeper and deeper into the half-settled portions of South America, where all manner of queer dishes were likely to be set before them, it would be the best policy not to stint themselves while the picking remained good.

Just before they "pulled out"—Danny's way of expressing an exit—more of the usual patrons of the hotel came flocking in, with the music starting to play. Amos might have enjoyed lingering for a while, since he realized there was going to be a musical treat worth listening to; but he had promised Danny to accompany him to

a film show close at hand, where a wonderfully clever and dramatic picture was on the screen. So they soon found themselves wrapped up in the fortunes of the hero, as played by a noted actor.

CHAPTER VIII

“BE PREPARED!”

“JUST ten by the clock, Amos; and we’ve got another long hour to kill before the boss shows up. Huh!” and Danny Cooper yawned hugely, without even the decency of making a screen of his hand.

“Even if the train is on time, and you never can tell,” was what his pal told him. “He wrote he would be here at eleven. Let’s have a game of billiards to make the time pass more pleasantly.”

Danny welcomed the suggestion. They adjourned to the billiard room of the hotel, and knocked the ivories around with more or less zest for quite some time, neither of them being experts at the royal game.

Ten minutes of eleven and they were once more occupying comfortable chairs in the hotel lobby, where they could keep their vigilant eyes on both entrances. As the hands of the clock drew closer to eleven, Danny fidgeted most nervously; while Amos sat up straight, and seemed “as cool as an iceberg,” as his chum noticed.

“Hot dog! there he is!” suddenly broke from Danny’s trembling lips.

Both of them started up and hastened forward

to greet the smiling gentleman who had entered, followed by a retinue of bag-carriers who appeared to know him as a liberal guest.

"Well," said Mr. Carstairs, eagerly, as he squeezed a hand of each of his *protégés*, "it certainly is a treat for my eyes to see you again, boys. You're looking quite fit, too."

"Couldn't be better, sir, only mighty tired of living on Easy Street, with nothing to do but talk over past happenings," asserted Amos, thrilled in every fiber at again feeling the pressure of his patron's hand, so firm, so like that of a big brother—for the love of aviation, with its amazing victories and dangers, draws men into a close comradeship, such as nothing else on earth may.

"Layin' on too much fat, sir, and that's no lie," complained Danny; "and we're filled chock-full of eagerness to be at work again."

"It's pleasant to hear you say that, Danny boy!" declared the gentleman. "Come right up to my rooms and we'll have a little chat. No need of going into any details tonight, because I've a touch of headache after the trip from New York; and besides, we've got all of tomorrow and Monday to fix up details; also pick up any little thing that can be taken along to add to your comfort."

They talked for nearly half an hour, during which time Amos told the gentleman sportsman—who had once been a plane pilot over in France, and carried the Cross of the Legion of Honor on

the lapel of his vest, as a mark of appreciation for his services in the Lafayette Escadrille—what a complete outfit they now had at their disposal.

"The new engine beats our old one all hollow in many ways," he went on to say, with unusual enthusiasm; "that combination landing-gear also works like a charm, so we are now in shape to make a safe and sane landing either on the ground or the water. Danny is tickled over his new aviator's sextant, and says he can find his exact location in a small part of the time it used to take him."

"I'm delighted to hear it, Amos."

"There are some other little improvements we've made, sir, about which I'll tell you later; and you will examine them for yourself when we take off for a little trial spin."

Seeing that Mr. Carstairs really looked a bit fagged, Amos had the good sense to give Danny a wink and nod; he then rose from his seat to say good-night, and agreed to have breakfast with the other at eight on the following morning.

While eating their Sunday breakfast together they had a thousand and one things to say. The two pals wished Mr. Carstairs to know what they had been doing with their time—how they had hunted up and devoured every scrap of possible useful information connected with South American countries.

"And with the bunches you kept sending every

little while, sir," Amos went on to say, "we feel like walking encyclopædias of the Southern Hemisphere. I've got it condensed, and in such fine order that I can turn to any page and coach myself on the customs and habits of the people we're aiming to visit next."

"Splendid!" exclaimed their benefactor and warm friend, his eyes sparkling with admiration.

"Thinking that it would help kill the time that hung so heavily on our hands, sir," continued Amos, "as well as prove a useful asset, we took up the study of Spanish through a school that sends out talking machine records, with weekly lessons. Both of us have more than a mere smattering of the tongue!"

"He c'n speak it like a reg'lar Spaniard, sir," Danny burst forth, turning his thumb in the direction of his chum.

Mr. Carstairs clasped each on the shoulder as he hastened to remark:

"A good thing for you boys to have thought of; I'm only surprised that it didn't occur to me. I know more or less Spanish myself, and sometime I'll coax you to have a little confab with me. Perhaps I can give you the expressive shrug that usually accompanies a Spaniard's conversation, and which I venture to say those records did not teach you."

They kept up a lively chatter all through breakfast. When they adjourned to a corner of the smoking-room, so that Mr. Carstairs could in-

dulge in his customary Havana, while Danny set his upside-down Dawes pipe to work, the running fire of talk kept on with undiminished vigor.

It looked as though they would make a day of it, such a multitude of important things continued to be brought up and discussed. Matter-of-fact Amos had a list of items he wished to bring up to Mr. Carstairs that, as Danny affirmed, was as "long as my arm, sir, and covers about everything that could be thought of."

"Of course, not having had a chance to get around," observed the gentleman later on in the morning, "neither of you can tell just how you'll like this quaint old Creole city that's always held a warm niche in my heart for various reasons. But we'll remedy that, for this afternoon we'll take a car and chauffeur, so as to be able to scour the city from end to end. I want you both to see everything possible, because, unlike most of our big cities, New Orleans still holds a strong vein of romance—I suppose it is owing to the fact that there are so many native Creoles and French people living here."

"Gee! I've always hankered to spend a week in this gay burg," Danny commented, "and most of all durin' the Mardi Gras time—I've read so much about the strange sights to be run across in the crooked streets that it just used to fire my blood, and set me wild."

Mr. Carstairs smiled as he remarked:

"I venture to prophesy, Danny, you'll both get

your fill of carnivals, *fiestas*, and all such holiday tomfoolery before you come up again from the South. Most Spanish-American capitals, even small towns, have an unlimited number of feast and fast days; so that it seems as though a good part of the citizens' time is taken up in riotous play—there's some kind of music in the air, or procession trailing along, through the entire day, and early night."

"We saw a wee bit of that over there in Tokyo, sir," said Danny, "and I understand it's even worse in China. Human nature sure is queer, I'm gettin' to believe."

"Well, all world travelers come to believe that, Danny," he was assured by the smiling Mr. Carstairs. "By this time you two boys are getting to be well-seasoned globe-trotters, I'd say. I envy you all you've still got before you. I've run across so much of it the game has rather palled upon me; but at least I can appreciate seeing newcomers eagerly drinking it all in."

They did have a most enjoyable ride for some hours that afternoon. The weather was balmy, and Mr. Carstairs, knowing every nook of the city, was able to point out about everything that would likely interest his charges, from the French market to the historic slave block, from which so much black human misery was auctioned off in the old days, families being separated, and mothers taken from their children as though they were animals.

They did a lot more talking during supper, so that by degrees Amos was marking off much of his lengthy list of queries. The boys had the good sense to retire to their room at a comparatively early hour, for, as Danny aptly put it, there was no need of "urging a willing horse," and Mr. Carstairs really must have talked much more than he would ordinarily in a whole week.

Amos sat up for an hour or more, making calculations, adding notes to those already half filling his little pocket memorandum book, and writing several letters, as though he wished to have these matters adjusted up to date before they set forth on their venturesome flight.

The letters he slipped down the chute before turning in, so that they would lose no time getting into the mails.

Both of them were glad to discover, when they awakened the following morning, that there were all the promises they could hope for in the way of fine weather. The sun had already shown his smiling face, and the bustle from the streets below had a rather cheery sound, as is always the case where negroes form a large proportion of the working population.

"Gee whiz! I sure do hope this spell of bully weather keeps on for another whole week," Danny observed, as he looked up at a cloudless sky; "for somehow I feel it'll be a heap nicer to span the big gulf without any storm or fog in the offing. They say it's a pretty treacher-

ous body of water, five hundred miles across, and mostly so shallow there's danger of vessels going aground."

"Don't swallow all you hear, Danny," advised Amos as he dressed. "People like to exaggerate a whole lot, you know. Then, too, you're apt to mistake the meaning of what they say. I remember how an old friend of mine, who in his younger days used to be a famous single-hand cruiser, going down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers alone in a sneakbox, a duck-hunting sort of craft; and on another occasion cruising along the Atlantic Coast in an eighteen-foot canoe made of paper.

"When starting along a rapid and deep little river down in South Carolina that would carry him many miles on his way, as well as save a dangerous outside paddle, he was solemnly warned by some friendly natives to beware of the 'treacherous wretches' that would lie in wait below to wreck his dainty craft, and break up his cruise. He kept worrying right along, until it finally dawned on him they really meant the several portions of the river where it turned abruptly back on itself, and which were known as 'reaches,' so that he had all his anxiety for nothing."

Again they joined Mr. Carstairs at breakfast; and since they planned to take off early on the following day there would not be many more of these joyous companionable meals for them to sit with their knees under the same table with their loyal host.

Questions were again the order of the day, coming from both sides; so that Amos found his fund of knowledge being constantly augmented. Danny on his part seemed more buoyant than ever, a fact that caused the gentleman to eye him a bit thoughtfully, and finally remark:

"Let me say right here, boys, that I hope neither of you is in a frame of mind to look upon this present undertaking lightly. You must remember that dangers lurk constantly over the heads of aviators who dare the wrath of the elements, and venture into unknown regions of the earth. This same temptation of exploring the astounding jungles of Brazil has been an attractive lure, drawing more than a few hardy souls to their death—aviators all of them, of undoubted courage and sagacity, even caution. But after their craft has spun out of sight amidst the mists of the Southern Sea, no tidings whatever have been received to tell their mysterious fate.

"Doubtless you may have thought there were thrills aplenty in spanning the Atlantic and Pacific oceans—in swinging across the waste places of Asia, and the various countries of Europe; but I fancy your forthcoming experiences, dear boys, will easily put all others in the shade for novelty, peril, and real dramatic potentialities."

CHAPTER IX

HEADED SOUTH

It was decided that they would make use of the morning to take Mr. Carstairs on a trial spin, so that he might discover how vastly the *Pathfinder* was improved in many ways since the new Whirlwind engine had been installed, with the various other accessories that promised to make "housekeeping" a rare pleasure for the pair of bold aviators.

They spent several hours speeding off toward the south, Amos being bent on showing the gentleman, who knew all about planes, what a treasure he and Danny felt they had in their charge. Mr. Carstairs did indeed wax enthusiastic at the remarkable things that accompanied these maneuvers; and expressed considerable sorrow over the fact that, owing to his old wound still giving him small use of his right arm, he was debarred from active participation in the sport he loved above all others.

Altogether they had a delightful little trip, and both boys were glad to get a sight of the great expanse of salt water across which they expected to fly in a southwesterly direction on the following morning. It was the first glimpse

Danny ever had enjoyed of the Mexican Gulf. All the romantic stories he had read concerning that body of water, once infested by bloody pirates, came back to his memory as he gazed entranced.

By one o'clock they were back again in the city and dining at their hotel. How vividly the recollection of those joyous meals in the delightful company of such a clever entertainer as Mr. Carstairs, would loom up in other days to come, when perchance they were trying to dine off a stale sandwich, washed down by some tepid water of questionable fitness for human consumption.

"By the way, Amos," their host went on to say in the midst of the meal, "I have been egged on into making another friendly wager with the gentleman whom you met in Paris, and also later on, I believe."

"You are referring to Mr. Bristol, I suppose, sir?" queried Amos.

"The same, Amos. It seems that he has been lately in touch with some explorer of note, an Englishman too, by the way, who assured him such a trip as we have arranged could not have one chance in a thousand of being carried to success. You see, Bristol has been telling him something of our plans, without mentioning a single name. What the other had said aroused his interest in the matter, and he forthwith started to hunt up everything he could lay his hands on, and read it all.

"Well, it impressed him very much as it did that explorer chap, and when he saw me next—which was a few weeks back, he having arrived from Paris on the French liner—he made me a friendly wager—same amount as before—that you would be compelled to throw up the sponge long before you ever arrived at Rio Janeiro. Being just as confident you'd get there, and to the other great city, Montevideo, I snapped him up.

"The money part, as you well understand, does not interest either of us a particle, but the principle of the thing does. Bristol, apparently, lacks my absolute faith in young America to accomplish things that to the average mind are absolutely impossible; and I want to take him down a peg. Still it is other and loftier motives that are back of this keen desire of mine to prove the amazing ability of our young airmen in these stirring days. And, boys, if Providence is kind, and you do meet all the conditions of this arduous task, remember that the wager, both sides of it, will be placed to your credit in the bank for a neat little nestegg, that may come in handy should either or both of you make up your minds at some time in the near future to have a home of your own. I've been such a rover that I never had a chance to enjoy such a blessing; but you are young, and with your lives still before you."

Danny wondered whether Amos would tell Mr. Carstairs about the dastardly attempt that had

been made to bring quick and certain destruction to the entire outfit. If such had been the case it was not done in his hearing; but then a number of times the others had talked earnestly when he was otherwise engaged, seeing more fuel being put aboard it might be; and as likely as not Amos had confided the story to Mr. Carstairs.

“And then, too,” Danny was saying to himself, a bit whimsically, “p’raps he showed him that mysterious *thing* he keeps deep down in his pocket, ever since Cosgrove handed it to him. Queer how he never gives me a hint, when we’re expected to share all our secrets, like true pals always do. But then what’s the use of botherin’ my poor head about such a little thing, when I’ve got all kinds of really important duties to think about?”

A few slight suggestions from Mr. Carstairs had followed their afternoon spin, so that Amos hastened to procure the trifling articles covered in this way. It did seem now that not the slightest thing had been neglected; even if eventually there should arise conditions requiring other means for filling a want that had been somehow overlooked, the situation could well be left for the natural ingenuity of Amos and his pal to handle.

Mr. Carstairs insisted on their retiring early.

“We have really talked ourselves dry, lads,” he told them, “and it would be like threshing old straw for us to start over the list again. You

are carrying letters of credit that will be as so much cash in any large city you may drop into, and yet you take no chance of being robbed. Then we've arranged on a method of correspondence, by letters and by wire; for I shall be more than anxious every hour I do not have some assurance that all is well with you."

Amos believed he could detect some signs that their good friend was weakening a trifle, perhaps beginning to reproach himself for tempting such valiant spirits to undertake so hazardous a flight, such as had proved disastrous to many others just as bold as themselves.

If this were so, there was not a shred of desire to throw up the great undertaking. They were feeling like a couple of hounds straining at the leash; and eager for the crack of the starting pistol—such is the vast faith of abounding youth, especially in these latter days, when such amazing feats are being continually recorded in aviation.

They accordingly carried out his suggestions, and retired early, bent on getting a good sound sleep. Still, it is doubtful whether either of them did enjoy any consecutive hours of dreamless slumber; since they were now standing on the threshold of a new series of adventures that might, as Mr. Carstairs had hinted, far excel anything in all their previous experiences. Danny at least did considerable flouncing about, as though he were camping out, and sly roots or stones might be digging into his ribs through the

folds of his doubled blanket; but that was a most luxurious bed upon which they lay, so it must be the excited condition of his mind that caused such restlessness.

Amos had set the alarm of the small but reliable traveler's clock which he meant to have with him in the cabin of the plane. At precisely six its whirr aroused him; he was such a light sleeper that it did not require the strokes of a hammer to start him into action.

They finished their dressing, packed their few belongings, and then descended to the lower floor. Here they were soon joined by Mr. Carstairs, who greeted them most affectionately indeed. Amos realized that the gentleman had not himself passed a very comfortable night, and he could readily guess why. But on that account he assumed his own most buoyant and confident manner, so as to bolster up the sinking sensation which he felt sure was beginning to overcome the gentleman.

They kept up a running fire of talk while they ate the special early morning breakfast the obliging manager of the hotel had arranged for them—indeed, there was nothing they would not have done for so highly respected a patron of the establishment. The waiter, obeying a whispered order from their host, fetched a neatly wrapped little box—which Danny just *knew* must contain an appetizing luncheon—and placed it beside his plate.

"Just as well to have along," Mr. Carstairs remarked, casually, "in case something happens to hold you back, even if you do expect to arrive at Mexico City around noon. I know what a fierce appetite the upper air currents give a fellow in good health. When you're setting your teeth in this snack I'll be sitting here, feeling lonely, and envying you lucky dogs your flight. But I've had my day, and must take a back seat, getting such enjoyment as I may in watching others carry on."

They were soon heading for the aviation field, where on the previous day, they had made sure that their supply of gas and oil was increased up to the safe limit for lifting.

"A propitious morning for your start, lads," observed Mr. Carstairs, as they rode along in the car he had hired for his limited stay in the Crescent City.

"Fine as silk, sir," responded light-of-heart Danny, who seemed almost equal to the job of trying to hug himself in the exuberance of his enthusiasm over finishing the long period of "waiting at the church."

"Couldn't be better if made especially for us," Amos advanced, with a glance overhead, and around such of the horizon as lay toward the southwest. "No sign of any bad weather, as far as I can tell. And sometimes, like many other air pilots, I'm able to *feel* the approach of a storm

in my bones. But everything is serene and joyful this morning, sir."

"Well, boys, be sure and watch your step all the while you're over the Gulf. It's got a bad name as a place where treacherous winds hold forth, and where tricky air-pockets abide. You know how such things can creep up on you un-awares, and do their worst in a few seconds. In other words, flying over the Gulf of Mexico means that eternal vigilance is the price you have to pay for safety. Still, nothing may happen out of the usual; and you'll laugh at my warning as an old man's foolish chatter."

"Never that, Mr. Carstairs," said Amos, vehemently, "we'll be more likely to believe it springs from your warm solicitude for us both; and you must surely understand how we appreciate that deep interest, sir. It spurs us in time of uncertainty and doubt to do our very best to carry on. Without that strong eagerness to please you I know of times when we would have been tempted to let go, and have things drift, instead of keeping up our control at the rudder."

"Thank you, Amos, for your compliment, which I know full well is a sincere one."

Thus they were presently at the field, which was strangely quiet at that early hour of the morning. All arrangements had been made for men to be on hand in order to trundle the plane to the runway. There remained nothing more to be done save for the pair to clamber into their

respective "pockets," after donning their dungarees and helmets, the latter with goggles attached—see that their parachute packs were where they could be quickly "placed," if any likelihood arose whereby there was a possibility of requiring such a means of effecting a safe descent—and then after testing the motor for a few minutes' try-out, say good-by to Mr. Carstairs.

Again did Amos notice signs of emotion in the face of their benefactor. It startled and distressed him, for he disliked to know that the other had come to feel such a strong attachment for them that his heart was reproaching him for his part in the undertaking.

It would be a terrible disappointment to both boys should their "good angel"—as they sometimes affectionately termed Mr. Carstairs in some of their chats—should be seized with "cold feet" at the very last, and compel a postponement or abandonment of the undertaking to which all their thoughts had turned during the last three months.

Amos felt this would almost break his heart, and that he must somehow manage to prevent it. Each of the boys held out a hand for a last grip.

"Good-by, sir!" said Danny, showing signs of feeling.

"We shall send you word all along the line, depend on it, Mr. Carstairs," Amos assured him, squeezing the other's hand. "And, sir, please

don't worry about our coming through with flying colors; they used to call me 'Lucky Amos,' just as they did Lindbergh, and things *do* seem to break in our favor about all the time."

He saw even more serious signs, as though the other were summoning his strength to control his voice and not cry aloud, so as to stop their start. And so, pretending to be blind to all this, Amos bawled out to the mechanics to knock away the blocks from before the wheels.

The next moment they were gliding swiftly down the runway, taking the full course with constantly augmenting speed, and then rising like a huge bird. So they launched in quest of new and novel sights and adventures; also to prove that the skeptical Mr. Bristol was again holding the short end of the wager.

CHAPTER X

THE BURNING STEAMER

"CAN you still see him, Danny?" demanded Amos, brokenly, as they cleared the flying field and started on their course.

"Sure thing," came the reply over the phone.

"What's he doing?" further asked the pilot, much too busy himself to turn his head and steal a last look.

"Standin' there like a stone, and starin' after us," replied Danny. "When I waved me red bandana he lifted his hand part way, and said 'God bless you both,' I'm dead certain."

Amos drew a long breath.

"Truth to tell," he presently remarked, "I don't believe Mr. Carstairs has been feeling well lately—he as much as admitted that some of his business friends and associates wanted him to give up the idea of running down to New Orleans; but he said horses couldn't have held him back. Fact is, Danny, he's getting to think so much of his 'boys' that he more and more feels our going on any of these risky flights; for you know he didn't act that way in the start."

"He's just the finest, cleanest sportsman that ever came over the pike!" snapped Danny

Cooper, "and I make no exception, Roosevelt or not. I love him like a big brother."

They fell silent for some time, as they flew over the same air-lane that had been traversed on the preceding day in their trial spin. Danny soon found frequent opportunities to make good use of his pet glasses, and from time to time tried to draw the attention of his mate to some particularly gruesome spectacle, where the mighty flood waters of the river had made a complete wreck of what must have been a most picturesque village, and its rich farmlands.

By degrees they began to be able to get traces of the finger-like antenna that marked the genuine delta of the Mississippi's mouth, through which its torrential floods under ordinary conditions reach the Gulf.

Then, a short time afterwards, they were speeding over the great Gulf itself. As far as the eye could reach—south, east and west—stretched the salt water, with here and there some island close to the shore line, and several lighthouses guarding the treacherous channels taken by ocean-going vessels when heading for New Orleans, or coming from that city.

Amos shaded his course a bit, bearing off toward the southwest, for it was their intention to seek the land around the region of Vera Cruz, from which port they could leisurely make their way to the inland Mexican capital.

This was familiar work for the two pals, and

how it brought back most vividly some of their previous great passages across ocean wastes—to Paris and back, braving the fogs and storms of the Northern Atlantic; then that wonderful non-stop hop from California across to Japan; and on the occasion of their last lap of the around-the-world flight, once more crossing the Atlantic!

Both of them must have felt a great thrill to realize that those momentous days of adventure and victory were now being duplicated in a smaller scale by thus crossing the Gulf of Mexico.

Some hours passed.

Amos was indulging in reflection, possibly connected with their kind benefactor, for it had affected the young chap considerably to discover how Mr. Carstairs was coming to feel a deep affection for his *protégés*. All the while he was also noting how smoothly and regularly the wonderful motor continued to perform its appointed functions.

There were some clouds passing overhead, but nothing that had the least appearance of giving them trouble; though at this season of the year in the Gulf region it is not at all unusual for slight showers to spring up, quickly to disappear as the rain cloud passes on its way.

He figured that they now had gone something more than five hundred miles since dashing down that runway. Suddenly he heard his pal utter a little cry that seemed to have the essence of dismay about it.

"Anything wrong?" demanded Amos, instantly on the alert.

"Hang the luck," said Danny, disgustedly, "that's too bad; and just when I was flatterin' myself we might be lucky enough to make the little jaunt in apple-pie shape."

"Shoot!" snapped the other, urgently.

"Hot dog! seems like we might be goin' to run our nose into some sort of sub-tropical storm after all, Amos! There's a nasty-lookin' black cloud dead ahead, an' I thought I saw a flash of lightnin' just then. Here, take the glasses and see for yourself."

Danny assumed charge of the flying-ship, for there were duplicate sets of instruments in his compartment; and his hand gripped control of the rudder even as Amos released his fingers from the stick.

"Get it, do you?" demanded the navigator, eagerly.

"Y—es, that's easy enough; but I'm a bit puzzled about the character of that same black cloud—it keeps moving off with the wind, all right; but unless I miss my guess it isn't a cloud at all, except of *smoke*!"

"Hully gee! do you mean a fire?" chortled Danny, more excited than ever.

"Yes, I'm sure it is by now," came the steady answer; and when Amos Green made up his mind in this way Danny knew very well there could be no possible mistake.

"A—ship afire out here on the open Gulf, with a fair wind blowing down near the surface makin' big waves at that—holly smoke! that's somethin' I never did set eyes on, Amos."

"Well, you're going to see it now," returned the other, "because it happens to lie straight in our course."

"Do you reckon we could do anything at all to lend a helpin' hand?" continued the sympathetic Danny, who had Irish blood in his veins, he was always proud to admit, and had inherited many of the best traits of that warm-hearted people.

Amos paused before making any reply, for it was a question in his mind as to just how a plane could possibly be of any assistance to people in small boats who were fleeing from their burning vessel.

"I don't see just how it could be done, with the waves as high as they seem to be," he presently answered. "If the sea was smother we could drop on the water and perhaps give them a tow. Wait, and we'll decide all that after we've had a chance to see for ourselves."

"They're a long way from land, I take it, Pal Amos."

"Something like a hundred miles—on a rough guess."

"And mebbe there are women and children in the boats," continued Danny anxiously.

"Hold your horses until we find how matters

stand," counseled Amos, as he laid the glasses where his companion could pick them up, and once more took charge of the stick.

Danny continued to stare, and utter occasional remarks, so as to keep his mate informed as to any new discoveries he was able to make. They were rapidly drawing near the pall of smoke, and even with the naked eye it was possible to catch occasional feeble glimpses of the burning vessel, which seemed to be a small coast steamer, possibly Mexican.

A number of boats that appeared to be filled with people stood by, the occupants watching the destruction of their vessel, and utterly unable to save any of their possessions. A strange fascination compelled them to hover in the vicinity of the steamer, which was burning very fast, as though they were unable to leave while any of the wreck remained above water.

By degrees Amos had dropped lower, so that they were now only a few hundred feet above the surface of the Gulf.

"Amos, see, it doesn't look so *very* rough!" cried Danny, presently.

"Not as bad as I feared, for a fact," the other admitted.

"Shucks! Amos, we've dropped down when there was as much sea runnin' as there is right now, and you know it!"

"True for you, Danny; but remember that we've got a whole lot heavier responsibility on

our shoulders now than we had then. If in trying to lend a helping hand to these poor people we did something to wreck our own ship, it would mean that our whole game was crashed."

"But, Amos, old pal, you c'n do it easy enough—there isn't your equal when it comes to makin' successful landings, on sea or shore," pleaded the other.

"We'll see," the other said, soothingly; and wise Danny knew very well he had overcome every apprehension concerning their own safety on the part of his pal.

"Besides, I c'n see women and children in them boats, Amos."

"Sure of that, are you, Danny?"

"Why, they're wavin' to us like mad," the other assured him. "I'd never sleep easy again as long as I lived, if we couldn't find some way to give them the glad hand."

"You win, Danny; we're going to drop down close by, and see how best it can be arranged. We've got a stout rope, but it wouldn't be long enough for a hawser to drag the boats after us. If they happen to have something to piece out with we might fix things. And the wind seems to be dying down, too, which is a nice thing for it to do."

CHAPTER XI

“GOOD OLD DANNY!”

Amos avoided that dense cloud of smoke as he drew closer, since he did not wish to be smothered; and, besides, it would interfere with what he planned to do. They could now faintly catch the shouts of the imperiled passengers and crew of the doomed steamer, who doubtless were greatly alarmed lest the plane that had so providentially come along at the time of their great need might leave them to their terrible fate.

Five minutes later, they were vastly relieved to see the giant air-hawk settle down on the agitated surface of the heaving Gulf. There was a great movement of oars as those in the small boats strove to come closer to the wonderful amphibian, fitted to drop on the water, or on shore, at the will of the pilot.

“It’s not yet noon,” said Amos, as though finishing up the sudden plan that he had conceived. “By heading directly into the west we’d make the nearest port, which I take it would be Tampico, the oil center. There we could spend the rest of the night on the bay, for I reckon we wouldn’t get in until hours after darkness came

on; and when morning comes rise from the water for Mexico City."

"Bully for you, Amos; I just *knew* you'd think of a plan we could work. And both of us will always feel glad we broke up our own schedule a bit so as to tow those poor women and children to shore."

The boats had now drawn near enough for Amos to exchange words with the one in authority. A man who wore some sort of uniform, to indicate that he might be the captain of the ill-fated steamer, called out in Spanish, which proved, just as they had suspected, that the boat was a native vessel, and not one belonging in the States.

Thanks to the earnestness with which he and Danny had lately been studying Spanish, Amos was able to converse with the captain, possibly a bit lamely, for he lacked practice; but they understood each other. The captain assured him they had plenty of stout cable rope, and that the four boats would be placed in the best possible shape so as to make the task of towing them an easy matter.

Everything was soon arranged for the attempt, the women in the boats continuing to call down the blessings of Heaven on these noble *gringos* who were going to see that they reached firm ground again after such a harrowing experience.

Just as Amos was about to give the signal for

the start there were fresh cries of excitement from the women and children.

"She's going to dip under!" hurriedly explained Danny, who had been "keeping tabs" on the wreck while his pal was making the cable fast.

Amos had just time to glimpse the hull of the wrecked steamer as it began to sink. Then all that remained of the craft was a mass of blackened wreckage floating on the waves.

Women were wringing their hands and children sobbing piteously in a way to make Danny's heart sore; but Amos paid full attention to his ticklish job, not wanting to make any grievous blunder such as would threaten disaster not alone to their precious *Pathfinder*, but with regard to all those innocents whose destinies had been placed in their hands by a curious freak of Fate.

He started slowly, so as not to put too great a strain on the rather slender hawser until he might better test its holding capacities. To the great delight of the two aviators everything seemed to go excellently; and soon they were moving along, dragging the whole four loaded boats in a string behind them.

Of course Amos knew it would be a long and tedious job to cover fully fifty miles in this fashion; but there was such a thing as trying to make too much speed, and consequently bringing disaster. Every increase in their forward push caused a greater strain on that taut rope.

"How are we making out, Amos?" asked Danny, after some time had passed, and the occupants of the boats seemed to be recovering to some extent from their recent shock, since the crying had about ceased.

"We must be making something like six miles per hour I'd figure, Danny; I don't dare try to increase it any, you know."

"And you said you thought we were about fifty miles from shore at the time we hitched up with this string of boats, eh, Amos?"

"More or less," he was told by the pilot. "Those aluminum pontoons are working prime, let me tell you."

"Then ten hours might see us through, if the sea doesn't get any heavier," Danny went on to say. He always claimed that his mind was a "one-track affair" in that he could only pay full attention to a single thing at a time.

"Not much danger of that," advised Amos. "Fact is, it's going down now, which eases the strain, more or less. When the tide changes the wind might come up again; but we'll hope not too strong to upset our calculations."

They kept steadily on the course that took them almost to the west; for Danny as navigator had made good use of his new little airplane sextant at high noon, and, finding his longitude and latitude exactly, figured they would strike the coast at Tampico by aiming toward the west.

About that time a little incident occurred to

stamp Danny further as being the possessor of a heart of gold.

"I say, Amos, we've just forgotten that box of lunch the waiter at the hotel had put up for us."

"Well, what's on your mind now, old pal?"

"Huh! I'm not so *awful* hungry, don't you know, Amos—and say, there's a bunch of kids in those boats! Like as not in the hurry of getting everybody off the burning steamer no one thought to put grub aboard—anyhow, I've watched to see if they were eatin', and they're not."

"I get you, pardner," said the pilot quickly; "the thought does you credit. Turn it all over to the women for themselves and their children; we can manage somehow to hold out until a chance comes along to stow away a fine fat meal. I'd choke on the first mouthful if I tried to eat when children were going hungry."

"Hot dog! I just *knew* you'd say that!" ejaculated the pleased Danny.

It was easy to get the package of lunch into the leading boat, with instructions that every bit of it was to be rationed among only women and the little ones. And if either of the boys felt a bit hungry as the afternoon dragged slowly along they did not experience the least scruple concerning their sacrifice; although Danny may have wondered just what delightful delicacies Mr. Carstairs had instructed the waiter to stuff that cardboard box to the brim with.

The sun was sinking, but never a glimpse of any land; yet this had been foreseen by the boys when doing their figuring, and it did not worry them, especially since the sea was now almost as smooth as glass, so that everything seemed to be working in their favor.

Finally darkness crept upon them, and through it all as the hours passed the sturdy amphibian continued to make steady progress, with every mile taking them that much nearer a safe haven.

CHAPTER XII

TROUBLE IN MEXICO CITY

It was a weird experience the two pals now found themselves passing through, and doubtless it must bob up again and again in their memories as they looked back over the days that were gone, with their varied and thrilling happenings.

All was quiet in the boats, showing that the children must be sound asleep, with the women confident they were certain to be safely landed, thanks to the two airmen who had come to their rescue when things looked so foreboding.

"Amos," said Danny, a long time later—it must have been toward midnight, if they were right in figuring the position of well-known stars.

"What is it?" asked the other.

"When you stopped the engine for half a minute just now I'm sure I heard a bell in the distance ahead!" continued the eager Danny.

"Well, perhaps a steamer—"

"But this was ringing chimes as if on the hour. Don't you see, Amos, that would mean we're close to shore, and some Mexican city."

"I'd be glad to know it," said the other, who was indeed growing weary, even with his mate taking an occasional turn at the stick.

The captain in the bow of the landing boat called out shortly afterwards to inform his benefactors that he knew they were at Tampico, which was a familiar port of entry for him. This good news turned out to be the truth; and so it came about that the string of boats started for the shore, with many ardent streams of voluble Spanish telling how grateful those wretched Mexican women and children felt toward those who had done so much for them in the name of suffering humanity.

"We'll feel around here until we can find a shallow place, so as to drop our anchor," said Amos, suppressing a yawn; "and then stick it out till dawn, when we can get away, and try to reach the capital, so as to have a square meal."

Danny knew very well one of the main reasons his pal had for making such a quick get-away was the fear that they might be visited by a string of well-intentioned people—friends and relatives of those they had assisted—wanting to pour a multitude of thanks upon their heads—and how Amos did hate to be lionized in any way, or even thanked for doing his simple duty.

They were soon held fast by a cable and anchor, so that the boat might not float this way and that with the wind or the tide, possibly to come in collision with some obstruction in the harbor. Amos managed to get a sort of lantern lighted, and hung up, to serve as a "riding-light;" for if they chose to be a boat for the time being they

must come under the maritime law governing all craft when at anchor in, or close to, a channel, in coast waters.

"Anyhow, I'm some pleased we did that little glad-hand job," Danny was heard to say, as he snuggled down in his limited quarters, and proceeded to forget everything in sound slumber.

Nothing disturbed them during the balance of that night, which marked one of the strangest experiences ever falling to their checkered career as voyagers to the far ends of the earth, and explorers of out-of-the-way places where the foot of a white man had never been planted before.

The coming of morning was warmly welcomed, for by this time both of them had begun to feel the effect of their long fast. Danny in particular was being haunted by vivid recollections of some of the many recent feasts that had come his way.

"I bet you we'll keep three waiters on the jump, once we strike a restaurant in the city," he declared, firmly, as though he meant every word. "And say, I'm gettin' in such a shape that I don't care thirty cents what sort of a meal is set before me, if only there's a *plenty* for a starvin' man."

"I'd suggest going ashore here at Tampico and trying to find a place open," said Amos, "but the chances are ten to one not a soul is stirring at such an early hour. Then, besides, we might get in some trouble with the authorities; for you know there's been a whole lot of nasty doings

here in the oil region, because of the oppressive laws that foreign investors are kicking about."

"Guess you're wise to decide to clear out while the leavin's good," Danny admitted. "About how far are we from the City of Mexico now, d'ye figger?"

"Not over a couple of hundred miles or so, I reckon," replied the other; "which we c'n cover in two hours—I put it at that because there are some pretty tough mountains lying between that might give us trouble, so we'd better take a longer course, following up the river until we can strike the Hidalgo section of country, and then heading directly south for the capital. Mexico City, as you know, lies on a pretty elevated plateau, and it's never very hot there, even in the middle of summer."

Danny doubtless heaved a heavy sigh, for just then, with that empty feeling of "goneness" at the pit of his stomach, that seemed a dreadfully long time. But he made no objection to the proposal of his chum, to whose judgment he always so gladly submitted.

They had no difficulty whatever in rising from the water, after a short run.

Over Tampico they went, rising continually. If any heavy-eyed night "cop" chanced to be awake at that unearthly early hour, he must have heard the familiar clamor of engine and propeller. Seeing a strange plane heading into the west, he would very likely put it down as some more

trickery of those abominable *gringos*, who, because they owned the land on which the hundreds of oil-well derricks stood, believed themselves to be masters of all Mexico.

At any rate, despite the ugly feelings existing between the Yankees and the Mexican soldiers guarding this coastal city, no shot was fired. For this Danny felt much relief; somehow he did not relish the idea of leaden missiles whistling around his ears, and endangering the gas tanks.

They continued on their way, following the river up until Amos, keeping tabs on the nature of the country, believed they had better turn sharply to the south, and put on more speed.

Before that time came, the sun was up, and the boys had a wonderful view of the country over which they were spinning at the rate of much more than two miles a minute, nearer three, to be explicit, as Danny realized, watching the tell-tale dial, and chuckling with glee over the splendid performance of their rejuvenated plane with its new and more powerful motor.

Something like two hours after leaving Tampico behind they found themselves approaching the elevated plateau on which the far-famed Mexico City lay. Danny drank in the view, and thought he had never looked down on a fairer spectacle; for the old Aztec city has innumerable objects of great interest, both as regards its quaint buildings and lovely parks, as well as the country immediately surrounding its borders.

"There's a likely looking aviation field in sight, Amos," he told his fellow voyager. "Yes, and it looks like a busy spot, too, judging from the crates that are rising and settlin'. I c'n count a dozen and more in the air at once. President Calles believes in holdin' the mastery of the air, it seems. You remember his planes played hob only a month or two back, when they chased after the beaten mob of Gomez, and turned their machine-guns loose on 'em."

"We've got to bottle up our opinions while on this trip;" Amos told him positively, "and on no occasion side with either the ins or the outs, if we want to keep free from a heap of trouble."

Apparently it must have been quickly realized by those below that this plane, coming from out of the north, did not belong to the squadron of Government bombers. They could see that a tremendous amount of excitement was taking place, with men running this way and that, as if eager to be on hand when they landed—among them were many in uniform, as though they might be some of Calles' choice soldiers, kept at the capital to be ready in case of any sympathetic uprising on the part of the "hecklers" who were opposed to his "strong-arm" policies.

Amos made one of the prettiest landings of his whole career, which was saying a good deal, considering his reputation along those particular lines. Immediately the crush was upon them, men pushing in from all sides, many staring hard,

with black scowls on their faces. Hardly had the pair managed to quit their confined quarters, helmet and goggles still in place, when an understrapper of a lieutenant gripped Amos by the arm. In fluent Spanish he gave him to understand that they were under arrest, charged with being spies of the tricky enemies of the great President Calles.

CHAPTER XIII

A FRIEND IN NEED

“Hot dog!” exclaimed Danny, who had managed to get the tenor of what the little lieutenant was saying, “now here’s a pretty kettle of fish. It looks as though we’d run against the rocks on the first leg of our cruise. Tell him what’s what, Amos—also about that letter you’re carryin’ for his big boss, President Calles.”

“Ah—so you are aiming to injure our good *Presidente*—it is enough to send you both before a firing squad in the morning, *gringos!*” declared the consequential soldier, who apparently was congratulating himself on having nosed out a terrible plot, whereby the revolutionists tried to strike a sudden blow, so as to turn the whole republic upside-down; in the discovery of which he would undoubtedly be pushed forward one more peg toward being made a general, at least.

Amos did indeed try to explain who and what they were, but he might as well have saved his breath, for the other had no intention of hearing anything that might interfere with his sudden great luck.

He gave gruff orders to the soldiers at his back, who began to push the two protesting avia-

tors along, accompanied by a hooting crowd of angry citizens and airmen. Just in the nick of time, something happened that put another face on matters.

Danny heard a voice demanding to know what it was all about—a voice that somehow thrilled him, for it seemed to awaken echoes of the past. He looked quickly at the advancing officer, quite gaudy in his uniform, and then gave a squeal of delight.

“Glory be! look, will you, Amos, who’s here? It’s our friend of other days—Señor Captain José Murchado, the lad we fished out of the bay after his plane had turned turtle on him! Well, well, you never c’n tell what’ll bob up on you these stirrin’ days, eh, what?”

Señor José had by now recognized them, despite their clinging helmets, ear-laps and goggles. He rushed impetuously toward them, and quickly embraced first Amos and then the more reluctant Danny. A torrent of words fell from his lips, so that it was with difficulty Amos found a chance to partly explain their presence in the Mexican capital. Then the native airman wheeled to face the staring and distressed lieutenant.

“It is a great mistake, Lieutenant,” he told the other. “You are to be commended for your readiness to protect our beloved country against any and all enemies, from within and without; but these two fine fliers are warm friends of mine, to whose bravery I really owe my life. Further-

more, they are bearing a letter from an old friend to our *Presidente*, which I myself shall see delivered. So, therefore, I'll take charge of them while they are making a brief stay in our city."

The frowns disappeared from the swarthy faces of those who had gathered so quickly, and things looked much more pleasing to Danny Cooper.

"Pal Amos," he hastened to say to his companion, "tell him first of all we'd like to see our plane safe in a hangar that could be watched. Then, the next important thing is to sit down to one big meal; for the bottom of my tummy is goin' to fall out pretty soon if chow doesn't come along."

Amos hastened to explain just why they chanced to be so hungry. When the eager captain learned how they had rescued several boatloads of his people from what might have been a watery grave, as well as given every scrap of lunch they carried to feed the women and children, his admiration was vastly increased. He wrung their hands for the sixth time and bade them take no further worry, since he would see that all they wished was carried out.

It was a happy Danny who sometime later found himself seated at a table in one of the hotels of the Mexican capital, making an inroad on the numerous steaming dishes set before him. True, he did not know what name some of them sailed under; but they "smelled mighty good,"

and seemed to fill a long-felt want, which was the main thing, after all.

Then, nothing would satisfy their warm friend but that they must allow him to show them the sights of the city. Since there was no need of any hurry, and they did not intend to make a fresh start until early morning, Amos was only too glad to have such a fine chance to look upon new and strange sights. He had the true spirit of the traveler-explorer, who considered no risks too great in order to gratify his lust for new and novel experiences.

They spent several hours riding in and out of the city limits in a very fair specimen of a Ford car. If there happened to be anything worth seeing that the captain failed to run them up against, it must have been an accident.

Then, after an appetizing lunch he took them to meet President Calles, with whom he had made an appointment, it seemed. Evidently, just then Señor José was high in the favor of the ruler, whose iron hand steered the fortunes of the Southern republic; which was another cause for Danny to believe his chum had surely been born under a lucky star. What promised to be impending disasters turned out blessings in disguise. If they had not been placed under arrest by the officious lieutenant at the flying field the Señor might not have been attracted to the spot, and in consequence all these favors must have been lacking.

In due time they were introduced to President Calles, who spoke very little English; so the brief interview had to be carried on in Spanish, the eager captain assisting now and then as interpreter.

The letter from Mr. Carstairs, written in Spanish, a knowledge of which was one of the gentleman's accomplishments, was produced and presented. When the President had read its contents Amos noticed how his face was wreathed in smiles. He shook hands warmly again with both airmen, and volubly declared it gave him great pleasure to welcome to his capital two friends of a man for whom he entertained such a warm feeling.

Then Señor José, knowing from the signs that the interview was over, led his two charges away; for others were entering to confer with Calles on matters of vast importance.

"Anyhow," Danny was whispering to himself, proudly puffing out his chest like a pouter pigeon, "we c'n always say we shook hands with the dictator of all Mexico, which is somethin' to boast about."

After that they attended to the re-fueling of their plane, in which job Señor José, being himself an old airman, was able to prove of considerable assistance. Great was his admiration when he saw what a wonderful ship the two *gringo* fliers possessed.

"Ah, believe me," he assured them warmly,

“nothing would please my heart one-half so much as flying to the corners of the earth in such a charming plane. I know not where it may be you are bound, comrades, but no matter how long or hazardous the journey you will certainly reach your goal when trusting to such a royal craft. I am amazed and thrilled to discover what marvelous new inventions are being continually brought to the attention of you Yankee fliers. We are trying to do our best down here in poor Mexico, but even that is far, far behind those of your rich and enterprising country. But we cherish hopes of some day showing ourselves worthy of being called *amigo* by our brothers of the North.”

Amos deemed it the part of discretion to stand by the plane during the ensuing night. In order not to offend their good friend Señor José he explained that they hoped to hop off at break of day.

But there was no trouble whatever. It must have been circulated that the two adventurous young *gringo* airmen had been warmly received by the great *Presidente* on the previous afternoon—trust Señor José to start that report going the rounds—so they were consequently looked upon with respect.

Early in the morning they managed to get a cup of coffee. Then Señor José appeared on the ground just as the *Pathfinder* was being towed and pushed to the head of the runway. His hand-

clasp sent them roaring on their way down the incline, to rise like a hawk on staunch pinions, make a circuit of the flying field, and then start once more on their journey toward the Southern Hemisphere; where they might expect to meet strange and thrilling experiences, such as had heretofore never come their way.

CHAPTER XIV

UNDER THE SKIES OF GUATEMALA

AMOS had ventured to tell President Calles that they were going to Panama, and "likely even beyond;" but the other had not seemed particularly interested—at least he did not ask any questions, for which both chums were thankful.

"A big day ahead of us, I reckon, pardner," remarked Danny, after they had seen the last of Mexico City, with the first rays of the rising sun gilding her church spires.

"Something like fifteen hundred and fifty miles from Mexico City to Panama in a bee-line," observed Amos, "partly over the land, and again with the Pacific underneath—a mighty interesting trip to boot; and for which reason I'm figuring on cutting it in two. You remember Mr. Carstairs told us not to let haste figure to any extent in this flight, but that we were to see everything worth while on our way south."

"Where would you think it best to drop in and spend the night, Amos?"

"There are a number of places for a choice, but I'm inclined to pick out Guatemala City. It isn't more than six hundred and fifty miles away, and would leave two-thirds of the trip to the

Isthmus for tomorrow. But then, that doesn't bother us any."

"I should say not," boasted Danny. "When we've covered two thousand miles in a non-stop flight over land, and several times that when crossing the Pacific to Japan."

"But all of this six hundred," advised the other, "will be a tough bit of work, for we'll have to soar over lofty peaks, and meet a bunch of nasty cross-currents of air, of which we have no knowledge whatever. So you see it's bound to be difficult flying, and needs constant watchfulness if we don't want to be caught napping."

"Who cares for expenses—gimme five cents worth of gingersnaps!" cackled the exuberant Danny, starting to get out the binoculars, as he believed the wild stretches of country far below would be well worth a "look-in."

"We were pretty lucky to have such a good friend back there in Mexico City," the pilot remarked, a little later on. "I only wish the same could be said of every place we pick out to stop at; but as a rule we'll just have to depend on our wits, backed with plenty of ready cash, to see us through."

"And, Amos, since we haven't got any more snappy letters, we'll meet no more presidents or big bugs in all the republics we figure on visiting. But then, that doesn't worry me any; I'm more interested in the country than the little strutting politicians who are at the helm. It is sure a

great treat to be lookin' down on such a wild picture. I bet you a penny that there's a heap of wild beasts loose in those big woods."

Amos had certainly uttered a truth when observing that they were likely to have their hands full in negotiating those hundreds of miles lying between the respective capitals of Mexico and Guatemala. It proved to be a continuous climbing and nose-diving job, seeking to avoid treacherous air-pockets, and contrary currents that delayed them seriously.

Danny discovered this for himself later on when the pilot, wishing to rest his tired arms and body, turned over the controls to his pal, and did a little figuring, with his chart spread out before him. Most of the responsibility always fell upon the shoulders of Amos, so that when he had time on his own hands he did not utilize it in the same way Danny did. Instead of staring through the glasses at the panorama passing below, he scrutinized the map in order to post himself on the character of the country still lying ahead.

At about noon Danny brought out a little "snack" he had managed to pick up without the knowledge of his companion. It proved very welcome, for being so much in the high altitudes, where the air was often bitter cold, their appetites had been considerably sharpened.

So, too, had Amos been quite right in figuring that they would not be able to make their customary swift flight when compelled to guard

against deceptive freaky puffs of wind that came without the least warning.

It was almost three in the afternoon when the watchful navigator announced that he could see the Guatemalan capital perched amidst the highlands to the southeast. Later on, as they drew nearer, Danny joyfully added that they would be able to land easily, for he could see an open field that undoubtedly was being used as a make-shift airport.

The plane's coming created considerable interest. Strange aircraft were not so often known to drop in at Guatemala City as to make it an ordinary occurrence. A number of natives surrounded them, the crowd being continually augmented by new arrivals as the news passed along the line. Danny did not feel that they were in danger of being treated in a "rough-house" way, although several men scowled darkly, evidently not pleased to discover that the boys were Yankees, from the great and proud Northern Republic.

Amos, surveying those by whom they were surrounded, suddenly discovered a face that bore the unmistakable stamp of the Englishman. What pleased Amos most of all was the fact that the red-faced man wore the soiled dungarees of a flier. The other was staring hard at the pair as they still sat in their "cubby," but when Amos gave him one of his broad smiles, he started to make his way to the motionless ship.

“Now, I’m glad to see lads after my own heart, let me tell you, chappies,” he exclaimed, extending a hand to Amos. “Name’s Lionel Blunt—was a pilot over there, and having found the going rocky back home after things quieted down, don’t you see, it compelled a chap to shake a leg, and look for work in foreign lands. Met with good luck in this place, and I’ve been a flying instructor here for three years. Not a great deal to show for my work, but we’ve several promising airmen who’ll make good. They’ve got all the stuff necessary to be first-class pilots. Let me be of assistance to you in any way possible as long as you hang out here.”

Danny was more certain than ever before that it was the rare smile of his pal which brought them friends in foreign countries. Few people could withstand its charm, and continue to hold a grudge against the possessor of such a winning grin.

The boys enjoyed the company of the blunt—by name as well as nature—Briton, and insisted upon him joining them in supper. This was brought from a neighboring restaurant and was served alongside the sprawling plane, for which, unfortunately, no hangar could be provided.

“You will have nothing to fear from these Guatemalan people,” the flying instructor assured them, “for they are pretty well disposed toward foreigners, as a rule, as there are considerable Yankee funds invested here. But it

would be well for you to be on your guard; there are hundreds of Liberal soldiers who, chased out of Nicaragua by your marines after they'd turned to banditry as a means of livelihood, hate all Yankees like poison. I suspect some of them may try to do you a bad turn, if they can possibly find a chance."

Amos and Danny were sorry to learn this, but promised to keep their eyes open for any hovering trouble. It was easy for them to understand how these "soreheads," as Danny called the fugitive Liberals, would believe they were on the way with their ship to render assistance to the U. S. Marines by ridding the distressed little republic of Nicaragua of the scattered bands of revolutionists. Consequently, they were likely to be ready to do anything in their power to destroy the plane.

It was well they had received this "tip" from their new-found friend and fellow airman. Just as Lionel Blunt feared, at about an hour after midnight, Danny, who chanced to be doing his turn at standing watch, crept over to where his chum lay asleep, and shook his arm to say:

"I c'n hear voices along over by the road, Amos—sounds like a big bunch of fellers might be headin' this way, and talkin' excitedly as they come. Mebbe we'd better be gettin' ready to repel boarders!"

CHAPTER XV

ZOOMING ALONG FOR PANAMA

“Go slow, Danny!” warned Amos, who did not seem to be unduly shocked by his comrade’s news. “It may be I can influence them not to try and injure our ship—a little palavering, backed by a liberal present in hard cash, often does wonders in quieting some of these hot-blooded patriots, I’ve been told.”

Danny was dubious as to this happy ending to their perils, for he could hear the approaching voices more plainly now. They certainly told of violent passions having been inflamed by the frequent use of hard drinks.

“By the same token I reckon the most powerful influence we c’n use is the neat clubs Mr. Blunt brought us,” he was muttering to himself, as he hastened to take up a position where he could block any attempt of the prowlers to get in the cabin of the motionless plane and wreck it completely.

Even Amos secretly felt apprehensive concerning the safety of their delicate charge. If it received rough treatment at the hands of these oncoming Liberal exiles it meant good-bye to all their wonderful plans for an epoch-making flight

over the towering Andes. The boys could never replace most of those instruments in South America, and if they had to wait weeks or months for them to arrive, it would be too late in the season for the carrying out of their contemplated plans.

Amos wished with all his soul that the good-hearted Englishman had decided to stick to them throughout that night; his influence with these "floaters" might be able to calm their heated blood, and make them listen to reason.

Now they hove in sight, a clamorous crowd, all jabbering away as though they were spurring one another on to deeds of violence.

More than ever did Amos regret the fact that there had been no friendly hangar available in which the plane could have been laid away. Then they might have been able to keep these assailants from breaking into the building, and wrecking the precious *Pathfinder*.

Amos called out, using his very best Spanish, and entreated the mob to wait until he could set them right as to who he and Danny were. He hinted that they would gladly pay a fair amount to save the ship from damage, and professed not to have the slightest connection with the detested marines who had been instrumental in helping the Conservatives to hold the ground in the recent bloody battlefields of Nicaragua.

This speech effected a temporary halt, for the promise of money sounded alluring to the ears

of these wretched exiles, who were so poor that they did not know where their next meal was to come from. But Danny could hear several loud voices haranguing the mob, and calling them all manner of cowards if they took any stock in the abominable lies this smooth-tongued Yankee *gringo* was telling.

Amos fancied that he saw signs of other forms approaching—that he even caught a glimpse of shining steel reflected from a nearby fire. Rendered desperate by the need of another minute or two of time he resorted to an expedient for holding up the attack. It had seldom failed when everything else had been tried in vain.

He chanced to have a handful of silver coins in his pocket, which he intended to keep handy for use in making small purchases. Snatching out some of these he gave them a toss, just as a farmer in olden days might sow seed broadcast by a flick of the hand.

Danny was filled with admiration because of the amazing cleverness of the little game. The clink of the coins as they rolled about on the ground seemed to be the kind of sweet music those hungry exiles could not easily withstand, judging by the way they “tumbled all over themselves,” as Danny afterwards said, in order to secure some portion of the spendthrift’s hoard.

Although the delay was only for a score or so of seconds, still it happened that even this was

enough time for the newcomers to reach the scene of action.

When Danny heard the cheery voice of their British friend urging the bunch of Guatemalan soldiers to "put a crimp" in the plans of the Liberal exiles, he felt like hugging himself.

The last coin having been rounded up, the stragglers from the Nicaraguan battlefields found themselves set upon by the little band of soldiers. Just then they were in no frame of mind to submit to any rough handling, whether by friend or foe, and consequently for a brief period of time there broke out a lively fracas, in which blows were stoutly given and received. Shouts rent the air, and other men came running from all directions, anxious to ascertain what it all meant, since they did not know of any enemy invading the sacred soil of Guatemala.

Amos and Danny managed to keep a good vigil, and twice caused some vicious vandal to beat a hasty retreat before their swinging cudgels. The fight did not last very long, for more soldiers came to the assistance of those whom Blunt had led to the spot. The Englishman understood that an attack was planned, with the intention of utterly destroying the Yankee plane, so that it might never be used against their compatriots who were still holding out in the mountain recesses of Nicaragua.

Beset on all sides, the followers of Sacara, although putting up a desperate resistance like

brave men and true, were compelled by sheer force of superior numbers to beat a hasty retreat that presently turned into a rout, every man looking out for himself.

The field being now clear, Danny breathed easier again, though secretly grumbling because he had not been given a single opportunity to get in a good whack at the miscreants, something he just knew he should forever lament.

The boys thanked Lionel Blunt warmly for his thoughtfulness in bringing some of his soldier friends to the spot in order to learn if all were going well. The officer in command begged the two airmen to believe that Guatemala men in uniform were not prejudiced in the least against their brothers of the Northern Republic, whose further investment of funds they anticipated with great satisfaction.

And so the unpleasant incident closed without any great harm being done, save that a couple of the unlucky Liberals had their heads broken by blows received from the guns held in the hands of the soldiers. Amos felt sorry for the poor wretches, and in the morning, when preparing to depart for Panama, he took Blunt aside, gave him a liberal sum of money, and bade him as a personal favor see that the pair should be supplied with "smokes" all the time they were kept in the hospital.

"My word!" exclaimed the Briton, surprise and pleasure written large upon his florid face,

as he squeezed the hand of Amos, "that is something no one not of the Anglo-Saxon race would ever dream of doing. Be assured, my boy, I shall see to your benefaction. Every time I donate a cigarette, I'll tell them what kind of chaps they turn out up in your big republic—as generous as they are brave and resourceful."

Both Amos and his pal felt they would not be sorry to get clear of such a hot-bed of broken-down revolutionists from a sister republic, who indeed had some reason for hating everything that had to do with the Yankees, since only for the presence of those fighting marines the merry fun of making a sad waste of the country would still be in full swing over in Nicaragua.

"Well," observed Danny, philosophically, as they once more found themselves speeding south, and nearing the shore of the Pacific, "now we're on our way to Panama and the Canal. It was a narrow squeak last night, I tell you, and that we're on deck this bright and glorious day, with nothing damaged, is some more of that fine Amos Green luck that haunts your footsteps day in and day out. May its shadow never grow less, and may it abide with us to the very end. Amen!"

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE MOUTH OF THE MAGDALENA

THIS turned out to be a red letter day, so far as deeply interesting sights were concerned. Nothing of an exciting nature happened, for which even voracious Danny expressed himself as duly thankful. Fond of adventure as young Collins professed to be, he admitted that there *were* times when an overdose along that line rather worried him.

They passed over the rough country lying between Guatemala City and the coast, and were glad indeed to see their old friend, the Pacific, once more; for they held many fond memories of that vast body of salt water, over which they had flown for thousands of miles.

Amos changed his course to fit the circumstances. He was bent on keeping along the coast line, since that offered them a steadier passage. When they presently reached the real South America, in Colombia and beyond, they were undoubtedly destined to meet enough lofty mountain peaks to satisfy any glutton's appetite for high flying.

A multitude of picturesque sights kept greeting Danny's eyes as he frequently peered through

the binoculars. The land itself was enchanting in its subtropical growths of palms of various types. Then they crossed over numerous keys, or islands, that as a rule were covered with the universal mangroves, where wild animals doubtless lurked, and possibly alligators as well.

Sometimes Amos, to gratify his eager pal, dropped low enough for Danny to catch fugitive glimpses of flocks of birds that were entirely foreign to his eyes, such as brilliantly plumaged parrakeets. Not only were there multitudes of snowy egrets and blue herons, but lordly flamingoes with beautiful plumage.

All the while the boys were making excellent progress toward their destination, the steady grind of the motor telling how the miles were being "clipped off," as Danny called it, in monotonous rhythm.

Yes indeed, that proved to be a day neither of them would be likely ever to forget; others might be more tumultuous, and crammed with excitement, but for quiet enjoyment it could not be excelled.

Around noon Danny, the sly rogue, again displayed a neat package containing some crude but tasty sandwiches. These cooks in the Guatemalan capital may not have acquired some of the "frills" that *chefs* up at home boasted of possessing, but just the same they knew how to make a substantial sandwich—two hunks of bread, without butter, and generous slices of meat between.

There was not a single break in their steady progress during the passage to Panama—the air was just bracing enough at the altitude which critical Amos seemed to favor—it was with something bordering on real regret that along about four that afternoon Danny announced the discovery of their approach to the Panaman city at the junction of the great Canal with the Pacific.

“Now I know the meaning of that favorite song of mine,” he declared, with a long sigh—“the ‘End of a Perfect Day.’ It sure has been a dandy spell, and what I’ve looked at was reward enough for coming all this way from San Diego harbor. There, you c’n get a sight of the Canal, Amos! How it does thrill a feller just to realize that away down here in Central America our flag is flying, and always will fly. I’m proud to be here to see the wonderful sight.”

They managed to swing around before coming down, so as to get what Danny called a “bird’s-eye view” of the silver line that passed up from the lower level to the hills beyond, that would in turn be succeeded by sheer heights.

They planned to spend a few days at Panama, taking a run along the Canal, to see the great locks at close range. Possibly they might never have such a good chance to gaze upon the results attained by the magnificent engineers of their own country. Mr. Carstairs had insisted on their doing their full duty in honor of the masters of their profession.

They were given to understand that strict rules and regulations governed everything at Panama; but Amos carried a letter from Mr. Carstairs to the commandant of the garrison. Therefore, the boys were given an audience by this official early on the following morning. They told him enough of their great and ambitious plans to gain his approbation. He promised to keep their secret, and gave them written permission to go about as they pleased.

Those two days were filled with pleasure, for they utilized their time in going along the Canal all the way to Colon on the Caribbean Sea, examining the working of the ponderous gates of the locks, watching the successful passage of vessels bound in either direction—in fact, what the industrious pair failed to see could, as facetious Danny expressed it, “be squeezed into a lady’s dainty thimble.”

They carried out their customary plan and saw that every kind of supply needed for the successful carrying out of the next stage of their southern, triumphant flight was put aboard the plane the afternoon previous to their intended start.

Danny noticed that his chum looked a bit more grave than usual, and could easily guess the reason—they were now approaching those stages of their outlined course that would be apt to teem with dangers—mountainous heights like the famous Andes—far-stretching jungles that cov-

ered the land for a thousand miles and more in every direction, with perhaps never a suitable place for landing and taking off—these were the bugbears that haunted the mind of Amos Green, not producing anything bordering on panic, but simply causing him to bring an additional amount of caution into everything he did, and think of “safety first.”

They left Panama at daybreak.

It was a hot morning, but this could soon be remedied, since it needed only a little boring upward to attain an altitude where the air was bracing—which is one of the greatest advantages an aviator has over his fellow men confined to living on the surface of the earth.

The plans laid out by Amos, and which had the full sanction of Mr. Carstairs, necessitated a break in the continuity of their southern passage; from Panama they crossed over to the other side of the Isthmus, and after that followed the shore of the Caribbean Sea until they eventually arrived at the Gulf of Darien.

Here they passed a night, with but little sleep, for their right wing had been damaged in making a landing on a wretched open field, so that hours were consumed in effecting repairs.

On the following morning another start was made, although not effected without Danny's heart being in his throat when they had one of the narrowest escapes in all his experience. However, there was no damage done, and now they

were heading into the northeast, intending to stop at the mouth of the big Magdalena River before nightfall.

In order to reach Bogota, the inland capital of Colombia, an airman has the choice of flying over the several lofty ridges of the Andes—known locally as the Cordillera Ranges—or of starting up the wide river that runs for many hundreds of miles through the length of the republic, its course being almost due north the entire way.

Amos had figured that since their craft was an amphibian, and could drop down on and rise from the water, it would be the part of wisdom for them to try and keep along water-courses as much as possible. It was this ability to alight even in the midst of impenetrable jungles that had encouraged him to lay his ambitious plans, such as would have staggered the ordinary airman, who required an open and fairly smooth landing field, with the end of almost every day's journey.

The flight along the Colombian shore was uneventful as far as stirring incidents went, though Danny found more or less cause for experiencing delight over certain views that came under his observation.

They arrived at Barranquilla, situated on one of the numerous mouths of the Magdalena River, at just two P.M. Amos was chary about attempting a landing and decided to drop on the water in preference, which was accordingly done.

CHAPTER XVII

BOGOTA THE NEXT STOP

"As easy as fallin' off a log," remarked Danny, after they had anchored in a shallow spot that seemed to be well out of the way of water traffic.

Amos shook his head.

"I'll never forgive myself," he said bitterly, "for trying to make that miserable landing yesterday afternoon when we could just as well have settled down on the surface of Darien Bay, and had no trouble. That open field deceived me, and seeing a plane there I imagined it must be a fairly decent landing place. After our nasty experience, I'm of the opinion now that crate was wrecked in trying to get back to earth, and has been lying there ever since. We came near leaving the bones of *our* ship in the same graveyard, too."

"Forget it, Amos!" said Danny, soothingly, "it's the only serious blunder I ever knew you to make. I reckon after all you're human, and likely to guess wrong once in a 'coon's age. Besides, everything came out O.K. and you know we must expect to get in the wrong groove once in a while."

They were engaged in cooking a bit of supper

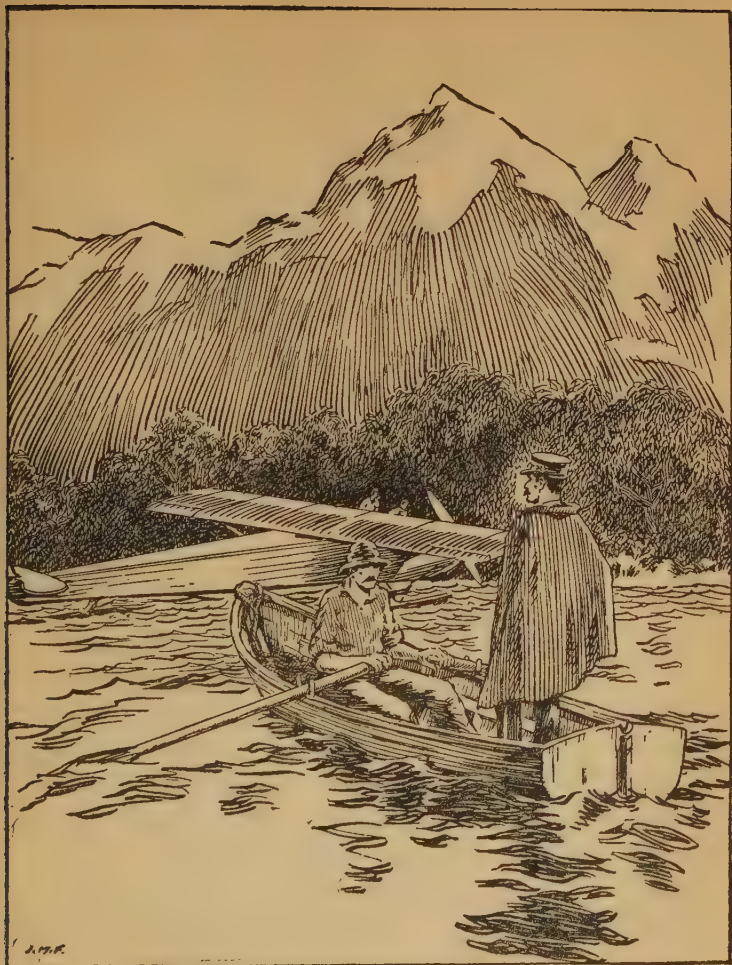
at their anchorage when a rowboat came out to where they lay. Besides the swarthy man at the oars there was a man in a resplendent uniform, whom Amos guessed might be the officer of the port, alive to his duties as guardian of the mouth of the most important river in Colombia.

This proved to be the case, and after Amos had greeted him with that wonderfully fetching smile of his, backed by Danny's wide grin, the dignitary found himself very desirous of making friends with these adventurous young airmen from the States.

There was a time not so long back when the Colombians felt they had a real grudge against all Yankees, as they blamed us for being more or less instrumental in egging Panama on to breaking the bonds that bound that territory to the mother country for much more than a hundred years.

But what President Roosevelt did—with an eye solely on the successful working of the greatest engineering feat ever known—the successful digging of the Canal—was eventually forgiven, after we magnanimously handed over a few million dollars as compensation for their loss, and wounded vanity. And so, Americans today are warmly received in Bogota.

The port officer learned as much as he wished to know concerning the object of the two venturesome aviators in visiting his country. He also proved very courteous, giving them much valu-



A rowboat came out to where they lay.

able information connected with their projected trip up the river.

They quite enjoyed chatting with their guest, although possibly he may have been a bit puzzled by some of their "talking-machine Spanish," as Danny delighted to term it.

They were not disturbed at all during the peaceful night that followed, although Danny found himself wondering what species of nocturnal wading bird it could be that uttered such queer sounds along the nearby shore.

As there was really no necessity for their going ashore, since they could get supplies after they reached Bogota, it was decided to take off as soon as possible.

They had a new thrill awaiting them on this day—passing south over a wide, crooked stream that sometimes made "hairpin bends," and almost doubled on its regular course, going three miles to make just one.

Soon they found themselves noticing many things which they had never seen before. These consisted, for the most part, of coffee plantations on some of the higher ground along the banks of the Magdalena. Colombian coffee is considered much more delicious than that grown in Brazil, and, as time passes, more money is being invested in these plantations.

Then, too, they saw numerous canebrakes, where sugar was evidently the chief object of the farmer, or planter. On the whole they passed

over tropical forests that must be mostly made up of valuable wood, which in time would bring many millions of dollars to the State.

In the course of the morning, Danny discovered numerous things that filled him with glee, these consisting for the most part of birds and wild animals, for which he kept a wary eye. Once he declared in great excitement that he felt sure he had just glimpsed a sneaking form like an enormous cat which he believed must be one of the family of cougars, panthers, or pumas, and known in tropical America as a jaguar.

Amos, too, felt a decided interest in the matter, because he had always been something of a big-game hunter. Indeed, as has been recorded in an earlier volume of this series, Amos had planned in company with his pal Danny, to spend his vacation, when connected with the aerial mail service, in joining a famous cougar hunter, "Uncle Jim Owen," on a great hunt.

Considering the innumerable bends in the river it was a matter of about six hundred miles from the mouth of the same up to the point where they must strike out to the eastward, rise above the mountain chain, and thus be able to make their landing at Bogota. But since they kept at a low altitude, in order to miss nothing in the way of thrilling sights, it was inadvisable to endeavor to make haste; consequently, they expected to spend most of the day following up the course of the diminishing Magdalena River.

On the way, they passed over what seemed to be a long though not very wide lake formed by the shallowness of the shores, that allowed the water to spread out for some miles. In the rainy season it must grow to much greater dimensions.

Amos now realized what a wonderful thing it was to have that combination landing gear when making a voyage of exploration in previously unvisited places. When it was found utterly impossible to land on firm ground, there would almost always be a chance to alight on some stream or lake large enough to allow taking-off again when the time for departure arrived. Had some of Amos's valiant predecessors been thus doubly equipped they might not have lost their lives.

It was well along in the afternoon when Amos, who had turned over the stick to Danny during the last half-hour, ventured to declare that he had reason to believe the little settlement that hardly deserved the name of town, over which they were then passing at a fair height, must be Beltran. There appeared to be another similar place a little farther up the stream, and on the western bank—this he assumed must be Ambelena. The port officer had kindly described the two places for him, and given him a clue by which he could make certain, and this he had no difficulty in picking out.

“Anyhow, we'll have to chance it, Danny,” he told his chum, as he again assumed full charge; for they would soon be having some difficult work

in passing high enough above the crags of the mountains so as to avoid most of the treacherous cross-currents and air-pockets.

"If we are on the right trail," he went on presently to explain, "by keeping a bit to the southeast we ought to sight the town of La Mesa that lies about halfway between the river and Bogota."

This very proof was given within the next hour. Indeed, while still high above the mountain range, Danny declared that he could glimpse a small town ahead. Fortified by this proof, they swung a trifle to the east and soon found themselves looking down on the quaintly situated Colombian capital.

Amos understood that Bogota boasted of an up-to-date flying field, and was growing more and more deeply interested in the science of aviation with each passing day. Consequently he did not anticipate having any serious difficulty about making a safe landing, after his customary style.

As for Danny, he felt a little peeved because that most interesting trip up the Magdalena River was at an end. For, when they departed from Bogota, they planned to strike boldly into the west, cross the Cordillera chain, and, striking the ocean, find a resting place for the night in one of the bays that they understood lay along the high shore between the mouth of the little San Juan River at Charambra Point and Esmeraldas, down on the coast of Ecuador.

CHAPTER XVIII

HELD UP

It turned out just as Amos had figured, since he had been assured by the friendly port official that the landing field at Bogota was very good—he brought the *Pathfinder* down as gently as in the old days, when running a mail crate in the service of the Government.

They were soon the center of quite a throng, in which airmen seemed to predominate. Everyone was filled with delight to know that a plane from the States had actually dropped in for a friendly visit while on the difficult flight southward.

Again did their smattering of Spanish come in handy. Danny declared that since they must make use of their limited vocabulary all the time they were in South America, they would be likely to become fluent in the use of the language by the time they returned home.

Those Colombian pilots proved themselves good fellows, and Danny was glad that Bogota had been included as one of the stopping-places.

As the pair absolutely refused to leave their ship to take chances, and as their new friends wished very much to have the pleasure of their

company at the evening meal, the fliers finally emptied one of the hangars, in which the Yankee plane that excited both their admiration and wonder was installed, with a special guard to protect it. They could readily understand how anxious their guests must be when so much depended on the craft being uninjured.

It was on the whole quite an experience for the pals. True, they did not join their hosts in drinking the various toasts that were proposed, save in a glass of water or a cup of rich Bogota coffee; but despite these minor shortcomings to a perfect evening they managed to have a "jolly time," according to Danny's way of expressing it.

Being somewhat fatigued by their protracted flights, and having time to burn on their hands, they decided later on that same night to spend several days in the quaint Colombian capital, picking up all the fresh intelligence possible connected with the rough path they had marked out ahead.

Here, too, they expected to make all their preparations, trusting to their slogan of "safety first" for the rest, not wholly forgetting the good will of the little cherub that sits up aloft, looking after the fortunes of a certain Amos Green.

On the succeeding day they started out to see what sights there might be in this strange Spanish-American capital for two curious-minded Yankee pals, who had come such a long distance

to feast their eyes on unusual things out of the common run.

It was a restful day, even though they did considerable tramping in order to cover the ground. Danny could not get over the queer fact of the air being so bracing, almost chilly as evening drew near; especially when he understood how near they were to the equator, a region he had always pictured as fairly sizzling with tropical heat. Amos took pains to explain that they were now up on quite a high plateau, which was doubtless the real reason why the Colombian people had decided in the beginning to locate their Government building so far away from the coast.

"Just wait," Amos told his comrade, "and you'll soon get your fill of heat on the equator, when we're hovering over that endless Brazilian jungle, and anxious to find some place where we can drop down and secure a fresh supply of gas, being nearly run out. Lots of interesting experiences waiting for us yet, old scout; so take the cool breezes while they're hanging around."

On the latter of the two nights they spent there in friendly Bogota—it happened on Saturday, December thirty-first at that—they ran into an adventure that might have proved more or less serious only that fortune was again kind. They had gone to a movie house—an old ramshackle barrack—at some little distance from their hotel, it chanced; but Danny was "sick for a sight of Yankeeland and its people." Besides, an old

favorite of theirs, none other than Tom Mix, was scheduled to make his appearance in the film to be shown that evening.

"Why, you know," urged Danny, in convincing his chum they must not miss this chance to enjoy themselves, "it'll be like a breath from home just to watch Tom cavort around, leadin' with all his familiar old stunts with lariat and gallopin' pony. Let's go, pardner."

The show was all right, and gave Danny heaps of joy; but on the way back to their hotel, the boys had to pass several lonely-looking and dark places; and it was in one of these that several hold-up men had taken a notion to instal themselves, to lie in wait for what fortune decreed should come along.

When these bold buccaneers tackled Amos and his mate they did not dream of what they had come up against. Instead of obeying their order to stand and deliver, Danny pitched right in, as though he might be a Paddy from Cork, with a shillalah in his hand and heads aplenty to crack.

Not liking the idea of being thus robbed by common footpads on the public street of a friendly capital, the two proceeded to put up a most vigorous resistance, and for a brief time things became sizzling hot. Danny loved a free-for-all fight, and although Amos did not profess to be much of a "scrapper," he nevertheless knew how to handle his fists when an emergency like this sprang up to confront him.

Although they gave promise of being able to hold their own, and would doubtless in the end have set their antagonists to flight, wounds might have resulted from a prolonged set-to, such as were likely to interfere with the trick-work of their calling, and thus break up their plans.

So, fortunately the racket was heard by night guards who, surmising what must be taking place, came hurrying that way, arriving in time to complete the consternation of the several ruffians. These chaps took to their heels, and vanished in the darkness, none the better off for all their trouble, and with a number of contusions to remind them they had attacked the wrong people.

Danny explained afterwards that he had knocked two of the enemy upon their backs, and exhibited a bruised set of knuckles to substantiate his proud claim, which Amos did not dream of disputing, knowing the fighting ability of his pal.

“Huh! bein’ shamelessly robbed by hotel landlords, coat-room boys, and waiters in general is bad enough,” Danny went on to add, vigorously; “but when it comes to bein’ held up, and asked to shell out by a bunch of plug-uglies that you’ve never even seen before—that’s too, too much, and I kick like a canal-boat mule.”

They were all fixed to pull out on the next morning. Some of their new friends had promised to be on deck to lend any assistance possible, which Amos and his pal considered mighty nice of them; nor would they soon forget the many

little acts of kindness which those fine Spanish-American airmen insisted on pressing upon them.

Sure enough, half a dozen of the boys were on hand bright and early on the New Year's morning to see them off, and wish them luck—possibly most of them fully convinced in their minds that the precocious pair would never be heard of again. They could not conceive it possible that aviators might successfully overcome the deadly dangers of lofty Andes peaks, the fierce heat of the jungles, also tremendous anacondas, and poisonous snakes, some of the most dreaded of all that may be found along the Amazon.

But Danny was humming to himself as though he did not have a single care in all the world; he shook hands heartily with each and every one of the native airmen, clambered into his place, after adjusting his "fixings" to satisfy his critical mind, and then awaited Amos's signal for the chocks to be kicked aside.

The runway was very good, and of sufficient length for even a ship as heavily laden as the staunch *Pathfinder* to get a decent start, so as to be in shape to rise like a swallow when Amos lifted her. The last thing Danny saw of their late comrades and fellow enthusiasts was a wild waving of sombreros and helmets and gesticulating arms. Then the aviators sped off toward the west as though shot from a cannon.

The new and most perilous phase of the great flight of the *Pathfinder* had now begun.

CHAPTER XIX

AMIDST SNOW-CAPPED PEAKS

BACK to the river, over their late air trail, they were now heading. Once they crossed to the other side and they would find a hard pull ahead, for vast heights barred the way to the Pacific.

"I reckon you've been keepin' the boss in touch with everything we've run up against, eh, Amos?" asked Danny, as though the subject had been on his mind.

"Never a miss so far," he was assured. "Whenever I can find the time I write a bunch of the details, which I know he'll enjoy reading. But every place where we've stopped for a night I've got off a short wire to let him know we're on our way, and that so far nothing's happened to knock us out of the running."

"I always felt sure that's what you'd do, pardner, knowing how thorough you always are. I only hope we'll be able to send him such cheerful reports right up to the time we finish our trip in old Rio Janeiro, and take the steamer back for God's country."

"We'll make our next port of call O.K., I reckon, Danny, because there are no dreadful obstacles to be overcome."

"That means Quito, in Ecuador, doesn't it, Amos?"

"Just what it does," was the reply. "You remember when we first laid out our itinerary we fixed on Lima in Peru as the jumping-off place. Mr. Carstairs having visited there, said it was a quaint old place, well worth seeing; but on examining the map closer we found that we could make the crossing over the snow-capped Andes a whole lot easier up in Ecuador."

"It sure did look ghastly, those many mountain chains in Peru—the whole country seemed to be nothing but peak after peak. And say, each figured a bit higher than any of the rest. I c'n stand some flying in an altitude of twenty-five thousand feet, but I don't hanker after bein' lost among the peaks, and gettin' frozen stiff. Yes, Ecuador suited us all right—*Keeto* you call that city, don't you?"

"Yes, but with the Spanish sound, remember, Danny. Most of the people talk Spanish, except some of the native Indians."

"And there's where we've got to get ready for the biggest job we ever tackled, is it? I admit I'm in a bit of a tail-spin whenever I try to get a grip on this undertakin', Amos, old pal. But I reckon you've got it all planned out, and I'm ready to let you shoulder most of the figgerin'. You know my confidin' nature, and so far, I've never seen you fail in anything you took hold of."

"Don't boast, Danny—a bad practice, I always

believe. The pitcher may go to the well just once too often, as my mother used to tell me. Here we are at the river, and now you can use your glass to discover fresh sights.”

Amos really wished to do a little thinking, which was utterly out of the question so long as his comrade felt socially inclined. He knew only too well what they would soon be up against when they said good-by to Quito, and took the bold plunge into that vast country of mountains and pestilential jungles, so unsuited to the needs of white people. There they would find numerous Indian tribes, foes of every Caucasian invader, and armed with the blowgun that spat out its poison-tipped arrows or darts.

A thousand difficulties like these would very likely arise to confront the adventurous young fliers. Venomous bats; hordes of savage insect pests; and above all the continuous sickening heat of the moist jungles would threaten them with sickness, if ever they were compelled to abandon a wrecked plane, and try to make their way out of the unbroken wilderness.

It was surely enough to give Amos Green cause for feeling a growing sense of foreboding, which he had difficulty in fighting off. Other men quite as confident and daring had ventured into those great solitudes, by which they were swallowed up, never to be seen again, their fate unknown.

Mr. Carstairs understood, and undoubtedly that was the reason he came so near calling the whole

desperate undertaking off at that last minute, being frustrated by their quick get-away.

It was small wonder that both of them grew more sedate and thoughtful as the time drew closer for them to embark on the most perilous stage of their foolhardy adventure. But they were game to see the thing through to its finish, now they had put their hands to the plow.

When these thoughts took possession of Amos, he always shook himself, and thought that never before had any explorer of these same Brazilian wilds been so thoroughly equipped to escape the perils as they were. In the first place, they could keep clear much of the time from the miasma of the horrible swamps and jungles by attaining an altitude where the air would not be polluted by poisonous gas from decaying, rank vegetation. Then again, being able to drop down on the surface of some river or lake, they could pass many a peaceful night, unmolested by the ferocious beasts that roamed the jungle trails in search of food.

All these things were in their favor, Amos firmly told himself. Undoubtedly some day or other a bold spirit was certain to accomplish this most difficult undertaking ever attempted—why should they not be the fortunate ones to come out alive, after taking their courage in both hands and seeking their ambitious goal?

Whoever would have believed five years back that presently a lone air pilot, with a heart that

knew not fear, and a steadfast belief in his own capacity for mastery, would start off into the unknown at New York City, and within thirty-five hours or so step out of his "cubby" in the city of Paris, astounding the whole world with his amazing deed? And yet young Lindbergh had done this very thing.

After passing the Magdalena River two tremendous ranges of the Cordillera loomed dangerously in front of them; but Amos sent his ship up to a level that gave promise of carrying them safely over the wide distances.

The sight they had of countless peaks, all covered with snow, was something well calculated to fill even Danny with wonder and awe. Nothing he had ever seen before in his own beloved Rockies came anywhere near to equaling this really gorgeous spectacle.

For almost two hundred miles it seemed to be a succession of mountain-tops. The temperature was far below freezing. Danny was glad they had come well prepared for such cold weather. To him, the sun overhead did not seem to have a particle of heat in its bright rays. All the warm garments the boys could don failed to keep them from shivering. It was even difficult for Amos to use his heavily gloved hands in carrying out his duties as pilot.

What hurt Danny most of all was the fact that he could no longer carry on conversation with his chum, getting encouragement from what Amos

might say in return. They had been forced to remove their head-phones in order to wrap their ears up snugly, lest they be frozen.

Now and then during the progress of this passage over the Central Cordillera chain of mountains and then the Occidental range, Danny with the aid of his powerful glasses was able to discover occasional tiny villages and hamlets nestling in some warmer valley. He envied those who were enjoying some of the tropical heat he had always associated with the regions of the equator.

About noon they found to their great satisfaction and relief that the worst part of their day's trip was past. They sighted a small river which Amos thought must be the San Juan, and, following its tortuous course down a valley eventually came to where it reached the ocean at a place marked on the chart as Charambita Point.

Once over the Pacific again, Amos headed south. The aviators still had several hours of daylight ahead. As the weather was fine, the pilot hoped to be able to arrive near Cape San Francisco on the coast of Ecuador by evening at the latest. There, in the little bay marking the mouth of the Esmeraldas River (which came down from the vicinity of Quito), they hoped to find a snug anchorage for the night. In a bee-line, this meant a run of something like two hundred and fifty miles, a trifling distance to a ship that could reel off a hundred and fifty within the hour when conditions were favorable.

CHAPTER XX

TEMPTING FATE

"Hot dog! talk to me about gettin' a kick out of anything—what would have happened to us poor boobs if our engine had stalled when we were up in cloudland over that Andes chain? Wow! and again I say wow! some nerve-rackin' service, believe me, Amos."

They had donned their head-phones with the coming of more genial atmospheric conditions, and so Danny was able to talk again. He chattered for quite some time, as they continued to speed along parallel with the coast, only that they did not enter any of the bays, but kept well outside, and on a bee-line.

When the afternoon was well along Amos told his chum he believed they were in the vicinity of their destination—that the coast at which Danny was gazing constituted a part of the territory of Ecuador, and when they descended to pass the night the city of Quito would not be much more than a hundred miles distant, as the crow flies.

Half an hour afterwards they had alighted in the bay, with a headland to protect them against incoming rollers from the ocean. This was fortunate, because so frail a craft as an amphibian

could not safely stand the shock of onrushing billows such as might follow a change of wind.

Making everything as snug as possible for the coming night, they proceeded to get up a meager supper, Danny constituting himself as *chef* for the occasion. A little alcohol stove, often used in the past, was set up to heat the bracing coffee they needed after such a strenuous day, with only a bite to break the monotony of their lofty flight through space.

Danny, being a good provider, had laid in enough food to carry them through twenty-four hours. He had also jotted down just what sort of "grub" he expected to gather together at Quito, preparatory to their taking-off on their long-anticipated adventure. Mr. Carstairs had insisted on Amos laying in a few valuable articles in the shape of condensed or evaporated food, which, although taking up but scant room, and being very light, nevertheless would save them from starvation in a desperate pinch—these were to serve as a stand-by in an emergency, and never to be used when other food was available.

The boys ate their evening meal as the sun was sinking below the horizon of the Pacific, and, of course, as they squatted there enjoying their food, they talked of many another occasion when they dined under foreign skies.

It proved to be a really peaceful night, with nothing to disturb them. The tide—very scant at the equator—ebbed and flowed, but no wind

arose to cause a change in their anchorage. And with the coming of morning both sat up, more or less stiff and sore from their cramped quarters, but glad to know that another day had arrived.

Again they indulged in a cup of strong Maracaibo coffee, taken black, since they had no evaporated milk along. Then they proceeded to "get up steam," as Danny was pleased to call the operation of trying out the engine so as to warm it up.

After a short rush over the surface of the bay with its little wavelets, they started to climb. It was easy following the Esmeraldas River, after leaving the miniature "town" of the same name behind them. As they continued on their way the stream grew smaller and smaller.

When the *Pathfinder* had covered about eighty miles, Amos mounted to a loftier altitude, in order to take his bearings. Here Danny's clever eyes eventually caught a glitter in the sunlight which he firmly believed must come from some church-steeple, or a copper roof.

Heading in that direction they presently found that he was right, since Quito lay before them, snugly nestled in a valley.

"And Danny," Amos told the other, when they had again adjusted their head-phones, "that same little Esmeraldas River is one of the very few in all South America that flow toward the Pacific."

"That's right, Amos, I remember reading about the queer conditions in this old southern hemisphere—that nearly all the high mountain ranges run parallel with the western coast—how the clouds are carried up the Amazon for thousands of miles, and then not being able to pass over the Andes, discharge all their moisture in the valley of the Amazon, which makes it one of the rainiest places on the face of the earth. Then, too, it goes without saying that the coast regions west of the Andes sometimes never have a drop of rain for years."

"Glad to see you've got it all down pat, Danny," Amos chuckled, as it was not customary for the other to store facts away in his brain in this fashion. "Now to find whether they have any flying field at this capital in the Andes. Somehow no one could advise me, though I asked right and left."

His anxiety on this score was soon put to rest, for Danny announced the discovery of an open piece of ground that looked promising. And there Amos brought the *Pathfinder* down so softly that those who watched must have believed one of their own condors, greatest of all birds in the universe, had provided the pilot with information on alighting.

Leaving Danny in charge, Amos set out to find the party to whom he had been recommended by Mr. Carstairs. This was an official of an immense business corporation in the States that had con-

nections with most of the republics in South America.

He was directed to the offices of the company, where he located his man, finding him very busy, but exceedingly glad to meet one of Mr. Carstair's *protégés*, of whom he had learned a great deal. He told the boys that he had carried out the wishes of Mr. Carstairs. There was an abundance of liquid fuel on hand to fill the tanks to overflowing, and as much more as they could take on in tins. Besides, the gentleman promised to advise them in every possible way, and to give them letters of introduction to numerous parties representing his corporation, whom they were to look up as Fortune allowed while on their perilous flight through Brazil and down to Argentina.

A great load was accordingly lifted from the mind of Amos. He had determined to spend a week or two in Quito—if they could stand things there—recuperating from their recent work, and waiting until the new moon had attained sufficient volume to be of real service to them as they pushed along. It would be gloomy enough under those cloudy skies of the Amazon without finding themselves in inky darkness whenever they dropped down to spend a night on some river.

To have a good friend at court meant much to these wandering air pilots, so far removed from their own native land, amidst strange surroundings, alien people, and compelled to adapt themselves to unfamiliar food and customs. They

gladly accepted Mr. Toombs's invitation to dine with him that evening at his own home, for he was a family man, it seemed, and had been located in Quito for several years.

He provided them with a couple of efficient men to serve as guards so as to keep prowlers away from the plane while they were absent. The safety of their property was always first in the minds of the two voyagers.

The aviators enjoyed the evening vastly, and Danny made himself quite a favorite with the family of their generous host. By degrees they began to get some conception of their surroundings, and, being particularly adapted to making themselves at home "wherever they hung their hats," both Amos and his chum began to believe they would enjoy their stay in Quito very much. There would be so many queer things for them to observe, so many unfamiliar dishes to taste, and so much valuable information connected with their future course "to soak in."

Amos knew full well that while it was possible to pick up many hints from the conversation of their host, and others they might meet while in the mountain city; nevertheless, once they cut loose from this last link of civilization they would have to depend for the most part on their own wits to solve problems, overcome difficulties, and eventually gain the goal they had set before them.

His chief concern was with the possibility of their running out of gasoline when hundreds of

miles from the nearest available supply—such a happening must be looked upon in the light of a catastrophe that was likely to be the beginning of the end, since they would find themselves utterly unable to move with their motive power cut off. In consequence, the list of those who had plunged in the “Land of Horrors,” and never been heard from again, was likely to be augmented by two more names.

As the days passed, the boys felt themselves getting in fine physical condition again, and Danny declared he could easily “whip his weight in wildcats.”

“They speak a lot about this savage black jaguar of the jungle,” he went on to say at one time, “but since we’re carrying that Winchester 30-30 repeating rifle Mr. Carstairs sent to you, I’d even enjoy having that three-hundred-pound bunch of muscles and sinews start a little friction with us. And then, as to the tapir, why, he’s only a large specimen of hog, they tell me—if it were an African rhinoceros, huh! that’d be another story, ’cause as I get it they can stand a heap of lead, and still carry on in their charge.”

Danny thus bolstered up his courage and believed every word he said in his boasting; but even his brave spirit might feel a thrill when he came to see a thirty-five-foot anaconda dangling from the limb of a tree, its enormous head, with white fangs and gaping jaws, swinging back and forth before his startled eyes.

Here among the Andes, they saw their first condor, and Danny was deeply interested in watching some men capture one of the monster birds. This was accomplished by strategy—a fresh hide being stretched out on the ground, with a man hidden underneath, after which the other three walked away. Evidently condors were not as good as crows at arithmetic, for they could not see that four of those two-legged creatures had come, and only three departed.

The great birds dropped on the ground, and hopped to where the hide lay, with its meaty side up—then suddenly the flock arose with a great flapping of wings, all but one, that seemed unable to make good use of its great pinions, for it fell back after getting a few yards from the earth.

The three men ran forward to rope the savage bird, for the fellow in hiding did not dare show himself lest that sharp beak play havoc with his eyes and body. Danny had been vastly entertained with the strange spectacle. When he saw what a terrific amount of strength the modern "roc" possessed in wings and neck, he wisely made up his mind that he did not wish to have anything to do with such a breed of fowl—turkey buzzards were rank enough for him.

By degrees, everything was being arranged for the hop-off, which Amos and Danny planned for a certain morning toward the middle of the month, having been advised that the weather con-

ditions might be looked upon as favorable along about that time.

Those days spent almost exactly upon the equator would long be remembered by Danny, as among the most interesting he had ever known, for there was so much to be learned that was new. Yet often he would see Amos sitting and looking into the east, as though lost in contemplation of the enormity of the task they had so cheerfully undertaken, in order to blaze the way through those mysterious and terrifying jungles that as yet had never been subdued or successfully crossed by man.

But Danny looked in vain for the slightest sign of weakening on the part of his comrade; nor did he expect to discover any such symptoms to indicate that Amos might regret his decision when consenting to undertake this task in the light of scientific exploration; full well he knew the nature of the other, and that dismay never could creep into his stalwart heart.

So it came that they had now arrived at their last night in Quito; unless something entirely unexpected came to pass in the last few hours they would soon cut loose from their anchorage, and be on their way, heading into No Man's Land, as Danny had begun to call the interior of Brazil, likening it to that dreadful strip of territory lying between the two hostile armies over in France.

The hour came at last when they said good-by

to their friend and his family, for they were all out early that morning to see the last of their gallant young countrymen. The ship started down the crude but effective runway, turned her arrogant nose upwards, and sped away on her dangerous voyage into the Unknown.

CHAPTER XXI

AT ANCHOR

THE first fifty or sixty miles they would have a hard road to travel, since the mountains extended that far from Quito. If they were fortunate enough to pass beyond the farther limits of the highlands of Ecuador they might expect to find that the side of the gaunt range sloped down steeply. Looking far beyond, they would get their first glimpse of the strange type of country above which their flight for hundreds and hundreds of weary miles must be conducted—the lowlands and thick jungle of equatorial Ecuador and Brazil.

Scattered at far-distant points were small and unpretentious villages, often consisting of but a few huts, or houses on stilts, but generally marked on the map, and given some high-sounding name that proved to be but a joke.

The well-studied plans of Amos called for them to fly to the southeast until, lying to the north of a spur of the mountain range, they discovered a small stream which they had been told was known as the Capo. If this were followed religiously along its tortuous course, it would eventually take them to its junction with another river,

the Coea; and still farther along a second must be seen also coming from the north. After that they expected to find a much larger river coming in from the south—Aguarico by name—and by this time quite a large stream would be formed, which, about two hundred miles farther on, poured its waters into the great Amazon.

Throughout all that day the two air pilots continued to push steadily on, sometimes at a comparatively low altitude, and again, when Danny complained of the dense humidity that soaked him to the skin, Amos would head toward the clouds, break through the dense screen, and seek sunlight above, until they were thoroughly cooled off.

Thus alternately rising and dropping down again, so as to follow the course of the guiding river, they did not make such rapid progress as had been calculated on; but Amos knew full well what a catastrophe it would prove to be should they be so unlucky as to lose track of the water-course that thus far had proved a sure guide.

"Still, at that," he told Danny, when the other mentioned this fact, "since every river in this neck of the woods eventually gets to the greedy Amazon, at the worst it'd only mean some more miles to go. An experienced airman could hardly get lost in this Amazon basin, where from his high coign of vantage he can look down at the country that spreads out like a huge map, with the rivers marked out as they zigzag along. Our

worst difficulties will likely be having some accident cause us to drop down into that horrible jungle, from which no plane can ever rise up again."

"That's why you want to stick over the water most of the time, I reckon, isn't it, Amos?"

"My main reason, Danny, because it's bound to be an insurance, you see; if we alight on water we can take off again, because there'll be plenty of open space for our necessary dash. That's the biggest factor in our making a safe flight over this untracked country—we avoid the thousand-and-one troubles that lie in wait for all foot travelers—hostile and vindictive Indians, wild beasts, monster serpents, deadly insects, giant blood-sucking bats, and last, but far from least, the eternal, humid, sickening *heat* that will bring down the stoutest white explorer who ever took a chance. Whatever is discovered about this vast country in the interior of a continent must come through means of amphibian planes that can find a safe harbor on land or water."

"Well, there's your first little stream uniting its flow with the one we've been following, Amos."

"Yes, you're right, Danny," agreed the pilot as he took the glasses, handing over the controls to his pal, "for just above where the junction takes place there is a little outlying settlement named Coea, which I can easily make out. Less than another hundred miles along we'll find the second river from the north, and another settle-

ment called San Pedro. For some good and sufficient reason the Spanish and Portuguese settlers in these parts almost always built their huts or cabins close to the junction of two rivers—it might be because the fishing was better.”

“We’re getting along all right so far, eh, Amos?”

“Fine as silk, Danny; but it’s too soon to brag. The worst part of the whole business lies ahead of us.”

“But if only we c’n keep on following river-courses as we go,” expostulated the other, “it ought to be a great help to get us down to Argentina and Buenos Aires.”

“Sure thing, Danny, but remember that the rivers are not going to be just as accommodating as all that. There will be a number of times when we’ll find it necessary to skip across over the jungle from one stream to another that may lie fifty miles or so away, both running in the same general direction, or it may be the opposite. But I’m not going to see mountains looming up before me when it may only be a mirage. We’ll meet and solve our difficulties as they come along, and not depend on making plans that are likely to be useless, or perhaps lead us astray.”

That was Amos Green’s wise way of managing—be prepared for the worst, hope for the best, and master problems as they appeared.

The aviators continued keeping well above the water, but not so high that there would be any

chance of their losing sight of the stream. In many places so dense was the ever-green foliage of forest and jungle that it was with the utmost difficulty that Danny was able to follow the sinuous course of the river.

It was now after midday, and the humid heat was almost overpowering; yet Amos realized that wisdom compelled them to stick close to the earth, when both of them knew full well they could quickly find relief by seeking a much higher altitude, even above the overhanging clouds.

After a long spell, with the afternoon getting well along toward its close, Danny joyfully announced that he felt certain he could see the Curaray River where it united its flood with that of the Napo. This indeed proved to be the case, for there was another small straggling settlement, just as Amos knew would be the case.

“We’ll keep on for another half hour or so,” he told his pal, “watching for a place where there seems to be a bit more width than common, and then drop down for our first night in a Brazilian jungle!”

The very thought thrilled Danny to the core, but even then he did not half realize what the real experience was fated to be—how he would meet with all that his fancy at its wildest had ever pictured—and a great deal more.

A short time later on he announced that he could see an ideal place for them to alight, and after Amos had circled around once or twice—

like a dog surveying the ground before settling down for a nap—he dipped the nose of his ship, and in another two minutes they were on the water.

Here he surveyed the surroundings, and picked out what seemed to be the likeliest place for them to anchor the amphibian. This was almost in the middle of the stream, a fact that puzzled Danny at first, for to his mind it would have been better to have made in toward one of the banks, where those immense trees grew that would give them a certain amount of shelter in case of a heavy downfall of rain, which threatened to descend upon them at any moment.

While the light held out they made everything ready for a night of it, and Danny even cooked their customary little pot of coffee, opened a can of pork and beans; then drew out his queer bread—the only kind to be picked up in Quito, and pretty poor stuff at best. They sat there in the dusk, with such weird surroundings as neither of them had ever encountered in all their checkered careers, talking quietly, exchanging opinions, discovering fresh and interesting sights every little while, and trying their level best to realize that at last, after so long a period of preparation, and goading their fancy, they were at last up against the real thing—embarked beyond recall on a most momentous undertaking that would mean either their ultimate victory or—disappearance, and death.

CHAPTER XXII

GAPING JAWS

“OF course, Amos,” Danny was saying, while they sat there in the double cockpit of their ship (having just figured out how they could make good use of the mosquito-net they carried, so as to escape the annoyance of the myriads of savage mosquitoes that swarmed about them, necessitating almost constant “slapping” so as to keep from being eaten alive), “you sent your last message to the boss before we left Quito?”

“That goes without saying, Danny. I’ve had too much on my mind to let you know its wording, but now I can repeat it straight. Just when we were about to cut loose from all civilization and trust to our skill and luck to come through this game alive, I wasn’t going to let any expense keep me from telling Mr. Carstairs how we felt about it; so I sent an unusually long wire like this:

“ ‘Hop off this morning bound for the Amazon—everything fine and dandy—will send next word when we can—do not be unduly anxious—we are confident of making Argentina within the next few weeks—then Rio and home.

“ ‘A. and D.’ ”

"How d'ye reckon that wire will get to New York City, and when, Amos?" queried the navigator, dubiously; for so far out of the beaten track of civilization did they seem to be that it was difficult to imagine a telegraph message as annihilating space.

"I inquired of everyone who might know," replied Amos, "and got but scant information at best. I have an idea though that they have a radio station somewhere along the coast and can communicate with Panama. Of course, once our message gets to where Old Glory floats, it'll go forward without a hitch. As to when the skipper will receive it, that's uncertain—it may be that it has now been placed in his hands. Let's hope so, for he'll not get any sound sleep until he hears from us at Quito."

By now the gloom of night enveloped them, for while there was a moon its soft light could not penetrate the masses of overhanging clouds. As both of them felt unduly tired, partly on account of the enervating heat, it was decided that they turn in early, curl up in their limited quarters, and try to forget all their worries for the time being in sleep.

Danny was restless, and, although Amos had taken a look at their holdfast anchor rope, he eased his mind a bit by also testing it before allowing himself to settle down. Evidently he had disquieting visions of their anchor being torn loose from the bottom of the river, possibly

through the actions of some inquisitive crocodile or other water monster. The thought of being adrift on that rapid current, floating helplessly down-stream, was rather disquieting to Danny.

So, too, he had quietly possessed himself of the little Winchester repeating rifle that Mr. Carstairs had insisted upon their taking along with them into the wilds of Brazil. This he handled fondly, and then laid carefully by his side, where he could seize upon it instantly, should necessity arise.

It was all on account of this being Danny's first night amidst the unknown perils of jungleland—doubtless in time familiarity, as usual, would breed contempt. But it was now all conjecture, founded on those thrilling accounts he had been reading, of the horrors to be encountered under the rainy skies of the Amazon country.

Before he realized the fact, Danny had fallen asleep at his post, although he had laid out to stand his trick at guard duty. When later on he opened his eyes suddenly, aroused by what seemed to be a dreadful screech close at hand, he reached out for his gun, under the impression that they were about to be boarded by hideous painted savages navigating crude canoes.

The moon was shining overhead, there having been a break in the canopy of clouds, and he could plainly see either bank of the river. Weird sounds unlike anything he had ever heard before welled up on every hand, until it seemed like a

chorus of grunts, yowls, snarls, and growlings.

"Hot dog! so *this* is what you strike down in this heathen country!" exclaimed Danny, as he held his breath, and listened to the conglomeration of noises that kept constantly rising and falling. "Say, I'd give my hat to see all these critters that are keepin' up such a racket. There, that was a sure-enough cat growl—must have been a big one to make such a fierce snarl—mebbe one of the black jaguars, now; or anyway the smaller spotted cat they call an ocelot. And monkeys—why, there're a dozen of the long-tailed chaps up in the big trees over on the south bank, jumpin' around as though they might be fairly wild over sightin' such a queer bird takin' a snooze here on the surface of their private river. Such chatterin' they're keepin' up, tellin' each other what they figger it out to be; mothers scoldin' an' spankin' their babies, and tellin' their old man where he gets off. Talk about a nice, quiet sleep, there ain't no such thing down in this wild-game country. There goes a pair of big cats havin' a reg'lar scrap; and say, mebbe they ain't makin' the hair fly though; we're gettin' all we bargained for, and then some. This sure is the life!"

It was indeed little further sleep poor Danny secured during the balance of that eventful night, introducing himself and Amos to the delightful music of a camp under the equator amidst the dense jungles. He continued to sit there, now turning this way and then the other, his rifle

gripped in nervous hands, and in constant dread of something attacking them.

There were even times when in the darkness—the clouds having once more screened the moon—he could hear a mysterious splashing between the anchored plane and the bank, as though some beast might be starting out to attack the strange invader of its native haunts.

Fortunately, that first nap of Danny's had been of considerable duration, so that after all he secured some hours' sleep. The sounds continued in spasms up to the time he discovered that dawn was at hand, when, as though obeying some recognized signal, they died out, and a solemn silence reigned.

It was a dismal dawn, but of a type with which they were bound to become more or less familiar as time wore on, and many other aquatic camps were added to the initial one; since it is pretty much of a universal thing for the morning to be ushered in with a thick mist, that, added to the ever present intense heat, makes life in the tropics so unsanitary and unendurable for whites, although the native Indians seem to manage without difficulty.

Amos had apparently slept through it all, much to the amazement of poor nervous Danny; at least, if he too had lain awake at any time, listening to the amazing multitude of voices of wild beasts, night birds, and scaly denizens of the water, he had not once sat up, or otherwise be-

trayed the fact of being annoyed by the chorus. But later on, Danny discovered that his chum had missed little of the racket, though not being in the least dismayed or unnecessarily alarmed.

Breakfast was soon prepared, since it must be more or less scanty, as their stock of provisions could not be termed extensive. Danny had visions of catching edible fish at a later date, possibly even figuring on dining on a fat little monkey, if ever he had a chance to drop one. But this morning the bill of fare included just a small rasher of bacon, some more of that Quito baker's heavy bread, and the coffee that did so much to cheer them up.

They did not hurry as had been the case so many times in the past, when there was urgent necessity for them to be on the wing every minute during the span of daylight, and even through nights as well, as when flying over the ocean.

Still, they could hardly linger very long over such a limited meal, and, when every scrap had been devoured, Danny commenced to arrange his little cubby for the work of the day, Amos having already done the same.

It was when the pilot, having tested his dials and found them to be in perfect condition for operation, chanced to turn his eyes toward Danny, that he saw the other staring with distended eyes at something which had just then caught his attention, since it had just commenced to move.

"Wow! look at that, will you, Amos—what a

monster, and dangling from a limb more'n twenty feet above the water, too. To think of me bein' so close to a snake about sixty feet long, hangin' by its tail, and swingin' its great big head with open jaws and white fangs—swingin' back and forth just like the pendulum in our old grandfather clock up home. My stars!"

CHAPTER XXIII

DANNY STRIKES BIG GAME

OF course, as Amos quickly discovered, Danny's lively imagination was running away with his sense of proportion, as often proved the case; the anaconda was nothing like sixty feet in length, perhaps not even half of that; but just the same a veritable "whopper." He was a most formidable appearing snake as he dangled there so near at hand, his swinging head just above the running water, his immense jaws distended, showing a gaping mouth, and white fangs that looked like boar's tusks to Danny.

Before Amos could say a word to prevent it, Danny had fired. He must have hit the serpent's massive head, for at the discharge of the rifle it loosened its tail grip above, and fell with a huge splash into the river.

"Hot dog!" gasped Danny, staring at the writhing coils as the swift current bore the anaconda past the anchored ship, "a bull's-eye for little Danny first pop. It was just *darin'* me to shoot, Amos; looked like those tantalizin' movin' targets down at Coney Island. But I potted the critter all right, didn't I, pal?"

"Guess you settled its hash, Danny; first blood

on this trip for you," agreed Amos, feeling satisfied himself, now that they were no longer threatened by the coils of that South American boa-constrictor, which could squeeze to death an ox or a Peruvian llama.

"Next!" chuckled Danny, with glee. "Now, if only I c'd get my lamps set on that black jaguar by which I was kept awake last night, I'd feel I'd made a little dent on the man-eaters of this here pestilential back country. Wow!"

Presently they started off, their handy little patent anchor having been lifted and stowed away. Amos found it best always to start upstream when possible—he seemed to believe that, like a duck rising against the wind, he could thus manipulate things better. After rising above the tallest trees it was a simple matter to circle, and head down-stream.

The next event of any importance to which they were looking forward with some eagerness, would be their arrival at the point where the river joined forces with the famous Amazon. This came about two hours after they left their anchorage, and which Danny always meant to call "Anaconda Camp," when writing his experiences on the tablets of his memory.

"So this is the Amazon, is it?" he went on to say, after giving the water-course a good look-over. "Huh! it doesn't impress me half as much as I reckoned it would. Our Mississippi could swallow this stream and never more than half try."

Danny was evidently scornful and disillusioned; so Amos considered it a part of his duty to set the other right.

"Don't make a snap-judgment, pardner," he advised his chum; "there's no way of getting around it that the Amazon is the greatest freshwater river in the world. Some people believe the Rio Negro River should be known as a continuation of the Amazon, because it's the logical head of the same, drains an enormous watershed, and would make it the longest river in the world, barring none.

"Our own Mississippi is under the same kind of handicap, for they claim the Missouri should be a part of it, instead of only a tributary, which would make it almost as long as the Amazon. Remember again that it's much over four thousand miles from this point down to where the big river reaches the sea, and that for many miles out the ocean is discolored by the floods that sweep from its delta outlets. A glance at the map will show you how scores of large rivers in this rainy land pour their waters into its channel."

This gave Danny something to ponder over, and although they did not expect to cover the lower waters of the giant of rivers, later on he did realize how it had no rival in all the world.

One thing pleased Danny, which was the fact of the widening of the stream necessary to hold its increasing flow of water. This was likely to place a greater distance between the plane and

the shore when again they anchored for the night. The echoes of the dreadful din—the battling great cats, the chattering and scolding of troops of roving monkeys on their journey amidst the tree-tops; the splashing and wallowing of unseen beasts or saurians—all these things still held out in his brain, so that he did not look forward to future nights in the jungle with any great relish.

They stopped early in the afternoon and found lodgment on the bosom of the rapid current of the Amazon. Amos had several things to which he wished to attend; besides, they were in no hurry whatever. The weather made them tire easily, and Danny was fairly *itching* to set a foot ashore, so as to at least say he had done a little hunting while passing through the heart of the Brazilian wilderness.

He managed to get hold of a floating log on which he poled himself to the shore, afterwards dragging his clumsy craft up-stream a bit, and tethering it to an overhanging tree, meaning to utilize it again when ready to go aboard.

“Don’t wander far away from the river, Danny,” the other called out to him, when Danny had taken his gun in hand, and seemed to be staring about in a suspicious fashion, as though already imagining he could see snakes dangling from every tree, when, truth to tell, they were but enormous vines. “Keep your eyes about you, for a thousand dangers lurk in these dense cov-

erts. We can't afford to take chances. If anything happened to you it'd wind me up, too; for alone I never could get out of this place alive. So hold your horses, because we're not down here to kill big game, or to map out the country."

Danny promised to stick close by—he just "wanted to stretch his legs a bit, and see what the land was like." He moved with the utmost caution, turning his head constantly, in fear lest some unknown peril would spring upon his back from tree or leafy screen.

He soon began to tire of this and concluded he had better turn back and get out there to the anchored plane; the trees allowed so little light to creep in under their leafy canopy that it was always half dark. He was very much alarmed lest he step on some poisonous viper that would sink its fangs into his leg.

In starting to go back to the river bank he swung round a little, his intention being to cover just a bit of fresh ground in hopes of starting a tapir, a water hog, or something worth a shot. Then he heard it close by, a low but ominous growling that ended in a spitting sound quite familiar to Danny, who had hunted cougar in the canyons of Arizona, and knew the habits of the entire cat tribe.

"Oh! hello! are you there, Mr. Jaguar?" he muttered to himself, fastening his eyes on that quarter from whence the growling proceeded. "Well, all I want is to get a glimpse of your yel-

low eyes, and I'll send you my compliments in lead."

His trained ear had already assured him the big cat must be perched on the limb of a tree, and it was there he presently distinguished two baleful, glowing twin orbs. He could also imagine the squatting beast working its hindquarters assiduously, as all cats do when preparing to spring on their intended prey.

Danny waited no longer but raised his rifle to his shoulder. He seemed to fire without aim, but Danny chanced to be one of those marksmen who shoot, as one might say, "from the hip." Some subtle instinct seems to serve them in lieu of the customary lowering of the head and glancing along the gun-barrel. Many of the two-gun fighters of former wild days on the Western border belonged to this class, being as quick as lightning on the draw, and firing with deadly accuracy that might seem almost supernatural in its certainty.

As his rifle cracked, he heard Amos give a shout that was drowned in the eerie screech of the stricken cat, which, dropping to the ground, commenced a series of evolutions and "cartwheels" that caused Danny to give it a second lead pill. He was filled with elation when the muscular form ceased its mad whirling and lay still.

Holding his rifle in readiness for instant action, in case a mate of the dead jaguar chanced to be in the neighborhood, Danny advanced until he stood proudly over his sleek prize. He succeeded

in dragging it to the river bank, and, mounting the carcass on the waiting log raft, paddled back to the anchored plane, Amos watching his operations with interest and satisfaction.

This night proved to be a repetition of the preceding one. Amos told his comrade there was really no sense of his remaining awake and on guard, since there did not seem to be a remote chance for trouble. No beast was likely to swim out to their craft, urged on by curiosity, or a desire to engage the strange object in battle; nor did he believe alligators would molest them.

By degrees Danny would accustom himself to his peculiar surroundings, and cease to breed those hobgoblins in his imagination.

"One more day—or at most two," said Amos. "Then we'll have to give the Amazon the shake, and turn toward the south. I believe we could easily cross the entire continent in this way, putting in our days flying, and at night settling down on the river to sleep. Still, we would have to be the plaything of storms and billows as we drew nearer the coast."

"When we say good night to the big river, where do we stop next, Amos?"

"Simply start up the Juara River, which comes in from the southwest," he was told. "After a couple of days following that stream we'll get an early morning start, and make our first land flight."

"What sort of a flop will it be, Amos?"



Danny advanced until he stood over his sleek prize,

"Only a small thing, as we'd look at it in the States," came the reply, "but down here it may mean all sorts of mix-ups for us. Some fifty miles south we'll strike the Purus River and will try to alight where it widens so as to form quite a lake, known on the chart as Capariha. Thereabouts, we can find a place to put up for the night. Then another hop will carry us to the Madeira River, perhaps direct to the famous Falls, that are said to be well worth going a long distance to see."

"I bet you a nickel, Amos Green, you've got this trip all charted, and that barrin' accidents we'll pull up each and every night just as you laid it out."

Amos grinned and nodded.

"Guess it wouldn't be like me not to do that same thing, Danny; but make up your mind things just can't run that smoothly. We'll get in trouble more'n a few times, from which we can extricate ourselves only through sheer pluck, and clever handling of the ship."

It chanced that they were delayed on the second day after starting up the Juara, so that a third one had to be consumed before Amos decided they had reached the point where they would bid that stream good-by and start south.

Danny began to worry concerning their diminishing gas supply, and hinted that he would very much like to know where there was a convenient station located in that interminable jungleland

region. But Amos only smiled and nodded his head, as if to say that it was all right, and that there was no need of bothering.

Evidently the wonderful Mr. Carstairs had foreseen this difficulty, and found some magical means for overcoming it. He seemed to have friends in every country under the sun, who were only too delighted to serve him, either because of their valuing his friendship so highly, or from a purely commercial standpoint, considering it good business to have close dealings with such a generous and open-handed multi-millionaire.

It gave Danny quite a queer feeling when on the following morning they arose from the river's breast, circled like a homing pigeon getting the points of the compass after its fashion, and then deliberately turning their backs on the Juara, to go zooming off toward the south.

Amos proved himself a clever pilot, and had no difficulty whatsoever in locating the little lake he had mentioned, lying alongside the river.

Here they passed one of the most unhappy nights thus far experienced, for the lagoon happened to be the den of a vast number of gigantic saurians, who kept things lively during the entire time with dreadful bellowing, splashing, croaking, and in fact going the whole gamut of disagreeable noises, so that Danny was kept on watch, anticipating that some of the warring bulls might take a notion to climb aboard the cockpit

of the anchored plane, and drive them overboard.

He was only satisfied when they again found themselves afloat on the morning of January twentieth at early dawn, with a heavy downpour of rain in progress.

CHAPTER XXIV

THEIR CLOSEST CALL

THERE was after all no difficulty regarding their take-off from the "Lake of the 'Gators," as Danny would forever designate their water camp. Amos was now heading a bit toward the south-east, Danny noticed.

"How come we've changed our flight more or less, Amos?" he asked.

"Partly because our next objective," his pal told him, "the junction of the Guapore and the Mamore rivers, lies in this quarter. Then again, I hope to be able to get a peep at one of the most beautiful pictures this part of the country can boast of—the Falls of the Madeira."

"Gee whiz! I never dreamed I'd ever have a chance to fix my lamps on that cataract, for a fact!" Danny exclaimed, showing much pleasure.

Just the same, he spent considerable time that morning poring over the chart by which Amos was carrying the ship toward the south. Then he could be seen trying to take stock of the amount of liquid fuel the tanks still contained.

"If only I knew," he told himself, "just where he expects to strike a fresh supply, I'd be able

to figger whether we'd get there O.K., or crash a long way off."

But disdaining to show an undue amount of curiosity, Danny contented himself by simply informing his comrade as to the number of gallons that remained in the tanks. Amos could quickly figure it out, and would know what their chances were. Since he did not disclose the least sign of sudden anxiety Danny picked up fresh confidence, and began to take more interest in the country over which they were so speedily passing.

It was pretty much the same monotonous solid green picture—forests and rank jungles without ever a break. Heaven help them if their engine stalled when away from water—they would not have more than one chance in ten of reaching the ground uninjured; and even should they do so they would be as helpless as the babes in the woods, in regard to penetrating that same mass of tropical vegetation for a few miles in any direction.

In due time Danny discovered the famous falls, and they managed to drop low enough to obtain a fairly good view, Danny even snapping off several pictures with his tiny vest-pocket camera, so as to show as evidence, if ever his story should be doubted by scoffers.

Less than an hour afterwards they decided to alight, and picking out the most suitable spot for a descent, soon rode the boiling waters like a huge duck. They scared quite a colony of those

same aquatic birds by their great splash. The ever-hungry Danny looked longingly after the departing bunch, and doubtless wished with all his heart he had a shotgun, and a little collapsible canvas canoe along. His mouth fairly watered at the thought of duck for supper, in place of the customary, monotonous fare, of which he was becoming very tired.

He did manage to catch several fish that looked edible, and on which he was willing to "take a chance," as he declared. How to get to the shore so as to build a fire and cook his fish, puzzled Danny. Left to himself he might have stripped and attempted the short swim, but wise Amos dissuaded him from such a rash undertaking.

"In all these rivers of tropical and subtropical South America," he told the other, earnestly, "there are millions of fish—I forget their name just now, but they're savage beyond anything you ever heard of. Many a poor chap has been actually torn to pieces with their sharp teeth, and they always attack by hundreds. Mr. Carstairs made me promise that neither of us would ever think of going in swimming while down here, for he knew all about these cannibal fish, and how they are dreaded even by the native Indians. But we can get ashore all right, easily enough. Look above your head, Danny."

"Hot dog! I get you now, Amos—by way of that lower limb of the tree! A bully stunt, too, I'd say; only I sure do hope there isn't any sixty-

foot anaconda hidin' up there among those thick leaves; I reckon I'd be willin' to take my chances among the cannibal fish rather than let him wrap his coils round my tummy, and give me a hot squeeze! Wow! this is sure life in the South American wilds. I'm gettin' fed up with it all right."

Danny was soon ashore, to be followed by Amos, the tree bridge proving to be an easy method of passage. Danny carried the intended supper as well as the means for cooking it, namely, a small frying pan; on his part Amos looked after the coffee pot and cups, as well as a couple of well-dented aluminum pannikins, which had done lots of service on other occasions. Fastened to his back by means of its strap was the repeating rifle; for Danny, remembering the episode of the black jaguar, refused to set a foot ashore unless it too went along.

But after all they met with no sudden alarm—the anaconda was only conspicuous by its absence; and while they certainly did hear the cries of monkeys and other wild beasts, and sometimes had a little scare through a suspicious rustling of dense bushes, the glow of their fire undoubtedly kept any and all carnivorous animals at a distance during their brief stay ashore.

The fish proved tasty, though a bit too bony to wholly please the enthusiastic sportsman who had jerked them from the river. But on the whole the change from their confined quarters aboard

the ship felt agreeable, and also gave them a chance to "stretch," so as to shake off their customary cramped feeling.

Nor were they bothered unduly during the night that followed; although at times there was considerable loud splashing and snorting, proving they must have settled down close to a favorite pool for some of the unseen beasts of the wilderness.

Again they set out and covered several hundred miles. Then, feeling somewhat wearied by the heat and the lack of suitable food, they concluded to call it a day, and came to rest close to the junction of two rivers—the Guapore, coming from the east, and the Mamore from the south. It was their intention to fly along this latter stream on the following day.

This part of their program was carried out to the letter, with two stops on the stream, about three hundred miles apart. According to the map Amos was going by, it was called the Grande River now.

All this time, Danny's excitement continued to grow constantly, with reference to their diminishing supply of gas. He pictured the most dreadful things coming to pass, when they would have used the last pint, and then unable to keep afloat with a dead engine, must come that awful crash which would mean their finish.

They were "scrimping" in every possible way, for drops of the necessary fluid seemed as pre-

cious as diamonds to the excited imagination of Danny. He recalled another dramatic occasion on one of their former great flights, when they just managed to drop down at their destination with empty tanks, and the engine showing signs of being about to give up the ghost. Would history repeat itself, or must they come down when miles away from the port at which Amos expected to be able to replenish their stock of fuel?

"By tomorrow night, old pal," Amos was saying, as they sat there and partook of what proved to be the very last crumb of food aboard the craft, "we'll be safe in a harbor where we can fill up again with gas; or else stuck on this crooked little river for keeps. It all hangs on whether we can make something like three hundred miles with what little gas we still carry."

"Oh! what a fool I was," said poor Danny, "not to have fastened a few extra five-gallon cans of the stuff along the wings, like we did off Hawaii on our long non-stop to Japan!"

That was like Danny, to take all the blame on his shoulders, when truth to tell it was partly the fault of Amos as well. But the other cheered him up in his usual optimistic fashion. Then Danny so far forgot his troubles as to get a sound sleep part of the night.

They started off on the next day in a drizzling rain that increased their unhappiness. Apparently their engine was in sore need of a general looking-over, to add to the unpleasant conditions,

and did not seem able to produce the usual amount of power per gallon of fuel used. This fact distressed Danny hugely, as he seemed to believe everything was conspiring to beat them out of their hoped-for victory, when so great a portion of their flight had already been successfully accomplished.

Those minutes dragged frightfully as they continued to follow the turnings and twistings of the narrowing river; for indeed in their desperate predicament they did not dare attempt a shortcut over the small range of mountains, so as to make a bee-line for Sucre. This was the Bolivian capital, at which arrangements had been so carefully made by Mr. Carstairs for a supply of gasoline sufficient to carry the expedition as far as Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, on the junction of the Pilcomayo and Paraguay rivers.

What added to Danny's discomfort was the fact that as they flew it had to be *up* the swift stream; had they been following its descent, should matters come to the worst they might have tried floating on its current, if only the rocks and other obstructions could be avoided.

They were now passing up a valley between two lofty heights. Amos was keeping close watch of the country, as though figuring on just when it would be time for them to leave the river, and cross over the intervening ground that lay between the Guapore and the city that was their goal.

The critical moment finally arrived; and it now remained to be seen whether they could "make the grade"—as Danny kept repeating to himself, with lips that were dry and cracked—and keep afloat until their destination was reached.

How his heart pounded like mad when with his glasses he managed to make out certain signs telling of the presence of a city! Apparently this outpost of civilization set in the midst of a dreadful wilderness had many times served as a beacon of hope to any lost travelers in the wastelands surrounding it. He examined the gas container with feverish energy, and broke into a shout of ecstasy.

"We're sure goin' to pull the stunt, Amos, old pal!" he cried, as the look of terrible anxiety on his pallid face gave way to one of growing joy. "There'll even be a bit left over, as a nest-egg for that fresh supply we're expectin' to take on here at good old Sucre! Oh! I'm so glad we don't have to crash—be a blamed pity if all our work went up the flue in a measly write-off."

It only remained for them to circle over the capital once or twice, so as to discover whether there would be any open field that might be utilized as a landing-place. Both of them were glad to discover such a promising patch of ground; but it was evident that some sort of runway would have to be fashioned before they could again hop off. However, that was not going to take away from

their great joy at being able to make a fairly decent landing, and, as Danny kept telling himself, "fill up with some kind of grub; just now I'm not caring a bit if it's baked dog, cooked Injun style—any old thing goes when you're out of gas and grub!"

They could hardly crawl out of their places, so weak did both fliers feel, now that the crisis had been passed, and safety seemed assured. After making a desperate effort, Amos managed to explain to one of the natives of the Bolivian city that they were expecting to meet a citizen by the name of Señor Pedro Braganza. Upon being told that the party was sick at his home, he left Danny in charge, hiring a man to lead him to his house.

Fortunately, Don Pedro was not so ill that he could not see his caller, after Amos had sent in his name, and that of Mr. Carstairs. He had quite a little chat with the sick man, who seemed pleased to meet him, and promised that the adventurers should be well taken care of during the time they must spend in Sucre. This might be only a few days, and again it was possible they would have to linger several weeks. For, sad to say, the supply of extra gasoline that had been immediately ordered on his receiving that urgent letter from his good friend, Mr. Carstairs, had not as yet arrived, although it had been shipped from Asunción some time back, and must be well on the way. The roads, always poor, were just

now in a dreadful condition from recent heavy rains, and nothing could be done.

Knowing that this would give them an abundance of time to look over the ship, and its engine, so as to get things in prime condition for the balance of their arduous flight, Amos was quite light-hearted over the situation.

He returned to Danny with the news, and, acting on the advice of Señor Pedro, they hired a big shed that had once been used for a corral, and proceeded to have the precious plane towed thither, so it could always be locked up whenever they chanced to be away from the field.

CHAPTER XXV

BUENOS AIRES—AND THEN HOME

DAYS passed.

Although anxiously awaited by the two fliers, the specially ordered supply of gasoline failed to show up. There had really never been such an alarming shortage of the fuel known before in the Bolivian capital. Señor Pedro was in despair; he had become quite well again, but really neglected his ordinary business shamefully in a stupendous effort to beg, borrow, or, as he himself declared, shamelessly *steal* sufficient gas to carry the hemisphere-circling Yankee plane as far as Asunción, where an abundance could be obtained.

To add to the mental troubles of Amos, his pal was feeling far from his own robust self. Very likely, the local physician told them, Danny had taken aboard a touch of jungle fever from sleeping so often on those infected inland waters of the Brazilian lowlands. He lacked his usual energy and cheery ways, and it worried his chum greatly, fearing a breakdown that was bound to upset all their delightful plans covering the wind-up of the great flight.

Two weeks and more they were thus marooned

in that quaint capital of Bolivia, during which time they poked around, and saw everything worth while. Then the caravan from the south-east came along, but alas! the order had been misunderstood, and the eagerly awaited supply of gas was woefully short of what had been ordered.

But with the small amounts Señor Pedro had managed to collect, Amos decided it would carry them to Asunción. If anything happened they could drop down on the river, and he would find means for getting supplies further along. At any rate, they were in no hurry whatever, and could wait a month if necessary.

It was on the twelfth of February, then, that they circled Sucre in the rejuvenated *Pathfinder*, finding that the engine worked better than ever after its thorough checking up. With a flirt of Danny's listless hand they were off.

Both of them looked pretty bad, being haggard and worn from their experience with the intense and depressing heat of the always damp equatorial regions which they had lately navigated, the bites of venomous insects, and a lack of good, nourishing food most of the time. Amos only hoped with all his heart that Danny would be able to hold out until they reached Buenos Aires, where he should have the best of attention in a hospital, knowing as he did how Mr. Carstairs would say nothing could be too good for either of "his boys."

As Danny, with a flash of his old-time humor, remarked, they "made three bites of that cherry;" spending a couple of nights in "camp" on the Pilcomayo River, the first near a small town named San Francisco (which sounded a bit familiar to their ears), and the second one close to some big marshes that lay to the westward, and from which all night long they were regaled by a chorus of the heavy bass voices of monster bullfrogs. Danny ventured to express a wish he might get hold of a dozen or two of those "fine and dandy croakers," whose bulky legs would afford them a glorious feast; but as they had no small boat handy, and wading was out of the question, this treat had to be abandoned as impossible.

They made the Paraguayan capital on the afternoon of the fifteenth, and found it a vast improvement on Sucre. Here they had no difficulty in getting all the gas they could conveniently carry. And here, too, they found pretty good restaurants, at which a bountiful meal could be secured; but it made Amos, whose appetite remained as good as ever, feel badly to see how little interest his pal took in sitting at a dinner-table, with money to burn in his pocket, and yet "not caring whether school kept or not."

Here in Asunción they saw their first South American *gaucho*, or cowboy, in all his regalia. In many ways he reminded them of their own swaggering cow-punchers and broncho busters

of the Wild West, now so rarely encountered save in some of the hard-riding films, and stage coach successes of such masters in their especial lines as Bill Hart, Will Rogers, and others of their kind.

Being so anxious about Danny, Amos decided to make a quick run down the Paraguay River, also the Rio de la Plata into which it emptied its flood, and reach Buenos Aires. Just the same it took them four days to accomplish the river flight, partly owing to Danny not feeling very brisk when on the wing, and other good and sufficient causes; Amos deciding that there was more need of carrying on leisurely than in trying for speed.

So, after all, Danny did not take much interest in seeing the famous vast stretches of prairie land called *pampas*, where great herds of Argentine cattle grazed, and were rounded-up pretty much as they had so often seen the Wild West cowboys, or Mexican *vaqueros* do further north. Danny was continually complaining because he could never get the hang of the seasons down in this "heathenish country"—to think of July Fourth being known as one of the *coldest* days of the whole winter, while Christmas, associated in his mind from babyhood with snow and ice—a day on which he had always skated, and built snow forts, was usually as hot as any normal August day ever known in all his entire experience.

At last they were in the Argentine capital, which they found very much like a southern copy of Chicago, with skyscrapers and everything else that marks a progressive American city of to-day. Hastily getting their plane in safe keeping, and telling no one a word as to whence they had come or whither bound, Amos took his pal to the best doctor he could find, to learn that poor Danny indeed did have a pretty strong touch of jungle fever, so that he must be entered in a splendid hospital, where his case could be watched, and the fever broken up.

Days turned into weeks, and Amos was beginning to despair, when finally the fever was beaten, and Danny commenced to recover rapidly. Of course Amos kept Mr. Carstairs informed of everything, and when he could send the joyful news, telling how the crisis had passed, with good old Danny on the sure road to complete recovery, it was really the happiest day of his whole life, for he had grown to love his pal like a brother.

It was the middle of March before Danny felt enough like himself to show an eagerness to be on the move; so accordingly one morning they skimmed down the excellent runway of the Buenos Aires flying field, and headed into the east, aiming to reach Montevideo that same afternoon, after a trip over the salt-water bay at the wide mouth of the Plata River, a distance of approximately a hundred and twenty-five miles as the crow flies.

In Montevideo they spent half a week sight-seeing, for already Danny was getting into his old stride again, and showing fresh spirit and humor each day, greatly to the joy of his devoted pal and fellow pilot.

On the twenty-second of March they were once more on the wing, and now covering the last lap of their wonderful flight. The first night they spent on a fine lake that paralleled the coast, and was known as Dos Pato, where they found a quiet harbor, and secured good, wholesome sleep.

They were now within something like five hundred miles of their last objective point, the wonderful city and harbor of Rio Janeiro. But they took their time in covering this distance, which, had there been any need of haste, they could have done in a morning's spin, so smoothly was their engine working these days.

In due time they arrived and found quarters for their plane, where it could be dismantled and crated, ready to go to the good old United States on the same coast steamship that would take them to New York, and the anxiously waiting Mr. Carstairs; where, with their knees under his groaning dining-table for successive nights, the entire story of their world-beating flight would be told, supplemented with numerous snap-shots taken by the hard-working Danny Cooper, and enlarged so that they aptly illustrated the talk of Amos, with extracts from his log-book, so scrupulously kept throughout the entire trip.

"And now," said Amos one evening, as they listened to the band playing in the open plaza, although the air was cool, since it was a Fall night, "I've got something to tell you, Danny, that I've been keeping back a long time, until I could believe the episode was complete."

"Hot dog! you're meanin' to tell me just what it was that guard we had to watch our ship back at San Diego gave you that morning after some skunk made a measly attempt to burn up the *Pathfinder*, eh, Amos?"

Amos Green laughed as though amused, and eyed Danny proudly.

"Seems you *did* catch me looking at it some time or other," he went on to say, taking something from his pocket, and holding it out. "You see, it's a knife, and a queer-looking one to boot, with the initials 'J.K.' marked on the little silver plate embedded in the buckhorn casing. Well, it chanced I'd seen that same pocket-knife many a time, and I knew it belonged to Jasper Ketcham—you may remember him once as a sky pilot; a good one, too, I'll say—who was discharged from the Government service for breaking some rules.

"He came to me on the quiet after we'd got back from our trip around the world—seems he'd learned about what we were doing for Mr. Carstairs—though of course knew nothing about the particulars, except that we were 'in cahoots,' as he called it, with a millionaire sportsman, who

thought so much of us he'd likely do anything I recommended. He wanted me to help him make a big sale of some aircraft property that actually wasn't worth half they asked, but on which his commission would help him get married.

"Of course I turned him down cold, but tried not to give offense; still he was disappointed and furious—you may remember what a temper he's got. He vowed he'd get even with me some fine day, and after all he tried his best to give me a knock when in some old plane he ran he dropped that fire bomb on the hangar sheltering our beloved *Pathfinder*. I wrote him telling him what proof I had, and giving him a chance to come clear, also telling him that if he was doing the right thing, and would give me his solemn promise to cut a new and clean path from now on, I'd send him back his property, and forget it all. He wrote me, and Mr. Carstairs sent his letter down here to Rio, that he was happily married, utterly ashamed of his bad break, had a good position, and would be only too glad to do everything I asked him. So that winds up the mystery of our close call at San Diego. The knife must have slipped out of his pocket at the very second he dropped his fire bomb."

The steamer for New York would sail on the following day, and Danny was never tired of telling the world how utterly overjoyed he would be to once more find himself under the Stars and Stripes, and in God's country, where they had

perfectly natural weather on the Fourth of July!

"All right," Amos told him, on hearing this explosion for the tenth time; "you'll be singing from the other side of your mouth on the very next Fourth that comes along; for unless I miss my guess our backer, Mr. Carstairs, means us to be away up somewhere among the icebergs around the North Pole, and doing our little follow-up stunt, taking pattern from gallant Commander Byrd's exploit, and trying to see if we can't go him one better."

"Hot dog!" Danny commented, on hearing this prophecy, and grinning in his old-time jolly fashion, "then instead of dodgin' jaguars' fangs; fightin' shy of those cannibal fish that tear a chap to pieces in the rivers of Brazil; tusslin' with water hogs, tapir, ocelots, and jungle fever thrown in, we'll be huntin' the Polar bear in his lair; knockin' over a walrus and a seal for keepsakes; spearin' fish through the ice, and doin' a bunch of tricks with the old North Pole. Gee! what bully fun that'll be, eh, what, old scout?"

That Amos hit a bull's-eye when he made his prophecy can be readily understood from the title of the forthcoming story (volume five) in the Aviation Series, which is "*Air-Voyagers of the Arctic, or, Sky Pilots' Dash Across the Pole.*"

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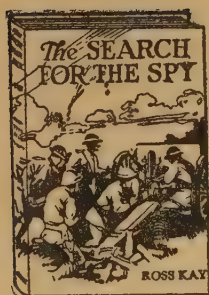
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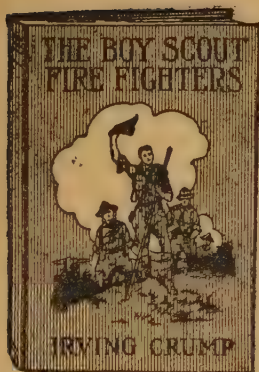
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